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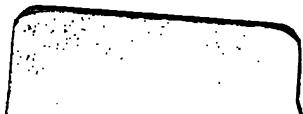


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REV. MR. STEBBINS'S
CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE

1843.



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A

CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE

DELIVERED TO THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN LEOMINSTER,

SEPTEMBER 24, 1843,

IT BEING THE COMPLETION OF A CENTURY SINCE THE ORGANIZATION
OF SAID CHURCH.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

BY RUFUS P. STEBBINS,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN LEOMINSTER.

The Lord God be with us, as he was with our Fathers.

—♦—

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WASHINGTON STREET.

TO

MY PARISHIONERS,

FOR WHOM THIS

Centennial Discourse

WAS PREPARED,

BEFORE WHOM IT WAS DELIVERED,

AND

BY WHOSE REQUEST IT IS PUBLISHED,

IT IS NOW

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

TO THE REV. RUFUS P. STEBBINS.

SIR,

At a legal meeting of the First Congregational Society in the town of Leominster, held on the 9th day of October current, the following vote was passed:—

"Voted, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to Rev. Mr. Stebbins for the highly useful and interesting historical Discourse preached by him on Sunday, the 24th day of September, 1843, (it being a century since the organization of the First Church in the town of Leominster) and that he be requested to furnish them with a copy of said Discourse for publication."

The subscribers, a committee duly appointed for that purpose, have the pleasure to present to you the above vote, and would add their own request, that you would be pleased to comply with the request of the Society.

SOLOMON STRONG,
CHARLES W. WILDER, } Committee.
LUKE LINCOLN,

Leominster, October 10, 1843.

To the Hon. Solomon Strong, Charles W. Wilder, Esq., and Luke Lincoln.

GENTLEMEN,

Your letter is before me, requesting, as a Committee of the First Congregational Society in the town of Leominster, a copy of my Centennial Discourse for publication, and expressing your desire, as individuals, that I would be pleased to comply with the request of the Society.

I am grateful, gentlemen, for the kind manner in which both yourselves, and the Society through you, have spoken of my endeavor to rescue from oblivion the ecclesiastical history of our Society; and I herewith place a copy of the Discourse at your disposal, wishing for yourselves personally, and the Society, for which you act, the blessing and approbation of Heaven.

Very truly, your friend and minister,

RUFUS P. STEBBINS.

Leominster, October 11, 1843.

P R E F A C E .

THIS Discourse was delivered on Sunday, September 24th, 1843, occupying the whole day ; I did not think it best to make two separate parts of it as it would be nothing but a form ; I chose to deliver it on the last day of the last century rather than the first day of this, because it came on Sunday, and in other respects seemed equally appropriate, if not more so.

My authorities are the town and parish records. I have not referred to volume and page, since the date will usually be as ready a reference. I have consulted published works occasionally ; these are referred to, either in the Discourse, or Appendix. The capital letters in the Discourse refer to Notes marked with the same letters in the Appendix. I did not think it necessary to make the reference in the margin. It may be that much which is contained in the Discourse would have been better disposed of if it had been placed in the Appendix ; as, however, it was not inappropriate to the occasion, though perhaps not of so much gravity as other portions, I have chosen to retain it in its present place.

Some paragraphs, omitted in the delivery, are now published ; and some paragraphs of a merely personal character, which were delivered, are omitted. At the risk of being considered personal, I have brought down the history to the close of the century, for the sake of completeness.

D I S C O U R S E .

PSALM XLIV. 1.

**WE HAVE HEARD WITH OUR EARS, O GOD, OUR FATHERS HAVE TOLD US
WHAT WORK THOU DIDST IN THEIR DAYS, IN THE TIMES OF OLD.**

It is no less a demand of justice than a prompting of gratitude to recount the deeds of our fathers. When no midnight cry startles us from our repose, and no fear of ambush makes us tremble as we go up to the house of our devotions, it is well for us to remember,—that we may prize more justly, and improve more faithfully our heritage,—the toil and self-denial of our fathers who won these fertile fields from the forest, and set up the altar of God in this valley. Especially is it incumbent to do so on this occasion, in this house. This day closes a century since the little band of sixteen,—Rev. John Rogers, Ebenezer Polly, James Boutell, Thomas Houghton, Benjamin Whitcomb, Thomas Wilder, Joseph Wheelock, Nathaniel Carter, Jonathan White,

Ephraim Stone, David Johnson, Simon Butler, Oliver Carter, Thomas White, Phillips Sweetser and Gardner Wilder,— formed themselves into a church, and erected the Lord's altar in the midst of this people. It is due to their memory ; it is due to the gratitude which our hearts feel for their labors, and the labors of their successors, that we pause this day, and look back through the dimness which gathers round the past, and meditate upon the labors, and self-sacrifices of our ancestors. In this review, I shall confine my remarks, as the day and the occasion demand, to the ecclesiastical history of the First Congregational Society ; and unless I mistake, we shall find much to excite our admiration and gratitude, and something to warn and instruct us.

This town, which was originally called “The Lancaster New or Additional Grant,” was settled principally by families from Lancaster, of which it formerly made a part. A little more than a century ago, the town was an unbroken forest. In 1725, Gershom Houghton built the first house where Mr. Peter Boyden now lives. No other permanent inhabitant came into the place for seven years ; when Col. Jonathan White settled in the north part of the town, where Mr. Battis now resides. Two years after, Thomas Wilder, and Nathaniel Carter settled in town. So that in 1734, nine years after the first settlement in 1725, and but six years

before the town was incorporated, (1740), there were in all but these four families within the present boundaries of the town. From this time, however, the settlers increased more rapidly. But it is impossible to decide how many families, or inhabitants, there were when this portion of Lancaster was set off as a town on the fourth of July, 1740, N. S. The petition of the town for an act of incorporation was burnt, with other papers in the office of the secretary of state ; and in the proceedings of the General Court, which commenced as early as 1737, when the petition probably was sent, there is nothing recorded which throws any light upon this point. There were said (by Rev. Mr. Rogers, in a prosecution which he brought against the town, 1758, for the recovery of part of his salary,) to be sixty families in town in 1749, nine years after the act of incorporation was passed. Settlers came into the place much more rapidly, probably, after the town was incorporated than before ; and I do not think it at all probable that there were more than twenty families when the town was incorporated. (a)

These few settlers, scattered over the whole town from Bee hill to Chualoom pond,—from Carter hill to Massapoge pond, with hardly a road for a wheel carriage through the woods, assembled in a town meeting, of which Thomas Davenport was moderator, held at the house of Benjamin Whitcomb, innholder, on the 15th of December, 1740,—the first meeting which was

called after the organization of the town by the choice of officers, July 9th, — “ voted to build a *meeting-house* the next year, fifty feet long, forty feet wide, and twenty-three feet high,” and chose Jonathan White, Joseph Wheelock and Nathaniel Carter a committee “ to see that the work is done.” I can almost see these fifteen, or at most twenty individuals, seated round Benjamin Whitcomb’s fire, in grave deliberation, the snow drifting in upon them through the chinks between the logs of which the house was built. It is more like a social gathering than a town meeting. They converse rather than debate. Many fear it cannot be done ; their hearts are timid as they think of the work. They have no money ; their fields are so narrow that the trees cast their shadows across them — they cannot give labor. Some few, to whom no time is convenient when anything is to be done, and who, under the shadow of a postponement, would hide their inactivity or opposition, propose to defer the undertaking to a more convenient time. Jonathan White has sat stirring the embers with the end of his staff which he cut on his way through the woods to the meeting, absorbed in profound meditation, apparently indifferent to the remarks of his companions. At length he rises slowly, his hat in his hand, from his chair in the corner, and speaks. “ Mr. Moderator, we must have a meeting-house. God’s tabernacle must be erected here or all our labor on these hills will be in

vain. It can be done. We must not bring up our children like the heathen. It can be done ; it must be done. If we begin, a way will be opened, and we shall succeed. Mr. Moderator, I move that we build a meeting-house." There is silence for a moment. With less of hope than fear on their countenances, they vote to do so, and depart to their homes in deep meditation upon the means which can be used to accomplish their purpose.

This was a vast undertaking, allowing that there were, at this time, thirty families in town, or a hundred inhabitants in all—men, women and children. A carpenter was hired to superintend the work, and "every inhabitant is at liberty to work his proportion if he come when he is notified," and is allowed six shillings a day for himself, and three shillings a day for his oxen. Two hundred pounds were raised towards building the meeting-house ; and they determined that it should be placed "on the north side of the hollow, at the east side of Ebenezer Houghton's field, it being the land that Mr. Ebenezer Wilder offered to give said town for the accommodation of building a meeting-house on." This spot was north of the present road to Mr. Amos Haws's mill, on the top of the hill towards the North Village. Thus at the first town meeting held after their municipal organization, the inhabitants of the town commenced action, as a corporate body, upon their eccl-

siaistical affairs ; abating not a jot of heart, or hope, or treasure, or toil. Though the wilderness, hardly broken, was all around them, inhabited by the Indians, the bear, and wolf, God was over them, and true hearts were in them. (B)

In the next spring (March 2, 1741) they meet again ; and it would appear that the smallness of their number convinced them that a smaller building would accommodate them in their worship. They determine to build only forty-five feet by thirty-five, and twenty-two feet high, and “to finish the outside, and lay the under floor.” So far had the people progressed in preparing the timber for the frame, that at a town meeting held May 27th, a committee was chosen to provide at the town’s expense, a dinner at the raising of the meeting-house ; they also vote that Robert Fletcher, William Porter, and Jonathan Robens (Robbins?) may be free from the meeting-house rate : it does not appear for what cause ; if for poverty, it shows compassion ; if for conscience’ sake, it shows liberality. The house was not raised, however, as soon as was expected. A difficulty seems to have arisen about the location of the house, and at another town meeting, held June 17th, the former vote respecting its location is reconsidered, and a vote is passed to place the meeting-house “on the south side of the hollow, on a piece of ground bought of Ebenezer Houghton for that purpose,” which

location was in the north-west corner of our present burying ground. The other spot of ground, though given, seems to have been thought too far from the centre of the town, and for this, or some other cause unknown, it was found preferable to buy a lot more central. Soon after this, probably, the frame was raised. But nothing of consequence appears to have been done towards covering it till in the beginning of winter. For at a meeting of the town, December 4, (1741) it was “voted to let out the finishing the outside, laying the lower floors, and building the pulpit.” So that there had been six months from the time they made preparations to raise the house before anything had been done towards finishing it. At this meeting the town also vote “to glass the meeting-house with square glass of the best sort of crown glass, and that it should be set in wood.” I am disposed, however, to think that, as the people proceeded with their work, the expense became so severely burdensome, that but few glass were at first set, for I find that in May (25) 1750, a committee is chosen “to see that the meeting-house windows be glazed.” Probably but a few of the windows were at first furnished with glass, the rest being loosely boarded up. On February 3, 1742, one hundred pounds, old tenor, is raised “to finish the house,” and a vote is passed “to have a month’s preaching.” This is the first record of preaching in town; whether there had

been any before, is doubtful. There is no tradition that there had been. There is, however, a tradition that children were baptized before the church under Mr. Rogers was formed ; still they may have been baptized by the ministers who preached before him, and no records were kept by them. (c)

In the act incorporating the town, a tax of a penny an acre is authorized to be laid for the support of preaching ; and this tax was called the penny acre rate. The first minister, Mr. Bucknam, was paid for his month's preaching by this rate. Who Mr. Bucknam was I am unable to determine, unless he be "Nathan Bucknam, who graduated at Cambridge, 1721, a son of Joses Bucknam of Malden, ordained at Medway, December 23, 1724; died February 6, 1795, aged 92." (Winthrop's Manuscript Cat. of H. C.) Mr. Bucknam may have left his people, a thing not uncommon, to preach for this young church a month. He was one of the council on Mr. Rogers's case, 1757. This is all the information I have been able to obtain respecting the first minister that preached in town. Like the Priest of the Most High God that Abraham met, he seems almost without descent.

The town now seem earnestly to have set themselves about obtaining a permanent religious teacher, and in August (9, 1742,) chose a "committee to go and advise with the neighboring ministers." Their object was,

probably, to learn who would be a suitable candidate. Some benefit seems to have been derived from this mission, for in October (25) the town vote to hire “Mr. Adams for twelve sabbaths more,” showing that he had already supplied their pulpit for some time, and, in some degree, to their satisfaction. On the 25th of November a fast was held, as was then the custom, when a people were about to enter upon the work of settling a minister. Mr. Prentice of Lancaster, and Mr. Stearns of Lunenburg preached ; the latter, in the morning, from Proverbs iii. 8 : *In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path* ; the former, in the afternoon, from Psalms lxxxix. 15 : *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* No doubt very appropriate discourses. The fast did not seem, however, to open to them fully their duty ; and in January (10, 1743,) Mr. Adams is requested, by vote of the town, to preach one month longer, and fifty pounds are raised “to finish the meeting-house.” It would seem that Mr. Adams judged differently from his people respecting the length of time requisite to enable them to decide upon his fitness for the pastoral office. He appears to have concluded that if four months would not do, no length of time or amount of preaching would ; and, although there is no record of the fact, it appears that he declined to supply longer, as in a week after, January 18, the town vote “to hear Mr. John Rogers preach one month,” and

choose a committee of three to confer with him. He preached his first sermon the 13th of February, from 2d Corinthians ii. 16. One month's preaching from Mr. Rogers, seems to have been sufficient to decide them ; and on the seventh day of March, 1743, the town vote “to settle Mr. John Rogers, a learned orthodox minister, as they have been advised by the neighboring ministers.” There was some difficulty in arranging the salary of Mr. Rogers. It was finally determined to give him forty-five pounds, lawful money, the first year, and to increase two pounds ten shillings each year, for two years ; and when there should be sixty families they agreed to give him fifty-five pounds, lawful money, annually, allowing at the rate of six shillings eight pence per ounce of silver ; making a salary equal to about one hundred and fifty dollars, when he was first settled. Mr. Rogers, also, had forty acres of land which was set apart for the minister, in addition to the salary payable in money just mentioned. His circumstances must have been quite narrow ; but gifts of one kind and another were frequent at that day, and the generosity of many persons whom he married, was so great that he entered it with the record of the marriage. Eleven years after his settlement, I find the following entry after a marriage : “N. B. This bridegroom was so generous as to pay a dollar.” And subsequently five more are mentioned by their grateful pastor as having done the same generous thing.

Mr. Rogers's ordination was appointed to be on the fourteenth of September O. S. or the twenty-fifth N. S. The services were, "first, prayer by the Rev. Daniel Rogers of Littleton; the sermon by Rev. Thomas Parker of Dracut, from Ezekiel iii. 17, 18, 19; charge by Rev. John Prentice of Lancaster; right hand of fellowship by Rev. Willard Hall of Westford." The same day a church of sixteen members was organized, and signed a covenant, which, with the exception of a part of one declaration — "We dedicate ourselves to the Lord Jehovah (to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and take him for our eternal portion," which may imply, though it does not assert, the doctrine of the trinity, — accords with the general opinions of this church at the present time. It expresses obligation to discharge moral duties which are not usually spoken of, though implied in modern covenants. Not one of the five points of Calvinism is alluded to, even remotely, in it.

I have thus, as minutely as the occasion, and the records would admit, traced the ecclesiastical affairs of our fathers down to the settlement of their first minister, and the organization of the church. Their meeting-house, fronting the south, with but one entrance on the south side, was only roughly boarded; but a few of the windows were glazed; no pews were made on the

floor, loose benches being used for seats ; no ceiling was inside to cover the timbers of the frame ; a rude pulpit was on the north side, opposite the door. At this time there was but one entrance. It would appear, however, that a door was subsequently cut through the west end, as the town voted (January 10, 1774) that the west door should be closed during cold weather. Such was the house they had been able to build after toiling zealously for almost three years. They were persevering men — men whose hearts longed for the house of the Lord. Let not their zeal grow cold, as it pours through our veins, in their blood.

I cannot persuade myself that there could have been at this time more than thirty-five or forty families in the town. They have toiled for three years to cover the outside of their church — they have settled a minister and agreed to pay him an hundred and fifty dollars — they have made a few fertile fields amid the dense forest ; but two dwellings are erected in the middle of the town ; — and now, from their scattered habitations, with their families before and behind them on horse-back, they wind their way, when the Sabbath morning calls them to worship, through the trees which overshadow their path, vocal with the song of birds, to their humble temple ; humble, yet dear to their hearts ; — their devout thoughts sometimes interrupted by the growl of a bear, or themselves startled by a deer bounding across

their path. There stands Rogers, in the strength of manhood, speaking to his hearers of God, and heaven, and duty, the little birds in the neighboring grove uniting their music with that of the worshiping assembly. Or perchance it may be bleak, stern winter ; shivering with the cold they enter their consecrated house, the snow sifting through the crevices of the covering, or drifting through the open windows, and a child, pained by the intensity of the cold, at times breaking, by its sobs, the stillness of their worship. So little is our self-denial that we feebly understand the worth of those institutions which our fathers obtained for us with so much labor, patience, faith and self-sacrifice.

But I cannot moralize. I wish to present to you the deeds of your fathers,—not my thoughts. I wish them to speak to you this day by their works. Jonathan White and Gardner Wilder were elected deacons in November (10, 1743) and in March (5, 1744) the town appropriated money “to furnish vessels for the church.” In 1747 (December 2) James Boutell, and Benjamin Whitcomb were added to the number of deacons. The first child baptized by Mr. Rogers was Elisha, son of Nathaniel Carter, (September 29, 1743). The first persons he married were Ezra Hale of Leominster, and Lydia Frost of Groton. No record of deaths was kept by Mr. Rogers, or if so, it has been destroyed. I am therefore unable to learn the first death after his ordination.

The next step in the establishment of the religious institutions of our fathers was the building of pews, and the seating of the house. I have already said that the pulpit was on the north side of the house, and the door opposite to it. Square pews were built around the inside of the house on the wall, and the body of the house was occupied by seats, at first, probably movable, afterwards permanent. The seating of the pews was the most difficult service in which the town had yet engaged. It touched the honor of the inhabitants. Rank, if not caste, was to be settled by it. It was finally arranged that seventeen pews should be built around the wall of the house, including Mr. Rogers's pew; leaving sixteen pews to be seated. The place which each of these pews was to occupy was then marked out on the floor, and the "highest payer of real and personal estate, (and one head) was to choose his place for a pew first, the second payer, next, and so on through the sixteen highest payers, this being the number of pews to be seated. The men who chose these places, were to build their own pews on them. The town built the pew for Mr. Rogers. The body seats were also seated by the same rule, as that by which the pews were chosen, the highest payer choosing first, then the second, and so on, till all the seats were taken up, or till all were accommodated with a seat. The pulpit stairs were on the west side of the pulpit,

and there was but one pew between them and the north-west corner pew. This pew at the pulpit stairs was numbered one, and was appropriated to Mr. Rogers. The pews were all numbered from Mr. Rogers's pew, going round the west end, and south side, and east end, and north side of the house back to the pulpit. There were three pews on the west end, and three on the east. There were two pews between the south-west corner pew and the door, and two between the south-east corner pew and the door ; and there were two between the north-east corner pew, and the pulpit. The body seats occupied the middle of the floor. Jonathan White, both colonel and deacon, was the highest payer, and chose number nine, the east side of the door, which opened back against the other side of the entrance ; — like most, who have the first choice, choosing the poorest pew, where he would be exposed to all the cold and noise possible. Ebenezer Polly, the second payer, chose number seventeen, the first pew east of the pulpit, as far as possible from the first payer. An hundred years does not change human nature. Gershom Houghton, from modesty or some other cause, took number eight, behind the door on the west side of the entrance. Nathaniel Carter, either because he loved his pastor, or wished to accommodate a large family, took his seat in the north-west corner, next to Mr. Rogers's pew ; and as his pew was larger than any of

the others, he gave five pounds, old tenor, in addition, for it. Thomas Wilder chose number fifteen, in the north-east corner. Thomas Houghton chose number sixteen, the second from the pulpit, on the east side. Joseph Wheelock chose number twelve, on the east end, next to the south-east corner. Benjamin Whitcomb chose number five, on the west end, next to the south-west corner. Jonathan Carter, number fourteen, on the east end, next to the north-east corner. Jonathan Wilson, number three, on the west end, next to the north-west corner. Thomas Davenport, number four, the middle pew, on the west end. Gardner Wilder, number ten, the second pew east of the door. Oliver Carter, number thirteen, the middle pew, on the east end. William Divoll, number seven, the second pew west of the door. Abijah Smith, number eleven, the pew in the north-east corner. Noah Beaman, number six, the pew in the south-west corner, the best location in the church by far, except one, and that the fifteenth choice, Abijah Smith's pew, in the south-east corner. The two worst choices were the two first; one by the door, to take all the wind, rain and snow, whenever it was opened; the other, under the pulpit, where the speaker could not be seen, or well heard. If these choices were made out of love to others, and to show that though there was the power, there was not the disposition to appropriate the best, they were noble acts. But if, as is most

probable, abundance of opportunity took away capacity to act discreetly, then it will not be just to set down these choices as self-sacrifices, but as blunders. How the body seats were arranged there is no record ; nor would it be necessary to repeat the order of choice, if known. The floor on which the pews stood was given forever for the use of those who built the pews. The difficulty of seating this part of the house was now over. But the body seats were seated twice within ten years of the first seating.

In 1747, (September 30) four years after Mr. Rogers's settlement, the town voted "to build stairs and finish the gallery seats." Where the stairs were it is impossible to imagine, unless one or more pews were removed, or unless the corner pews were not actually in the corner of the house. In 1750 the town vote "to glaze the meeting-house." Probably till this time but few glass were in the house. On the third of May, 1753, ten years after Mr. Rogers was ordained, the town vote "to finish the outside of the meeting-house and color it." Thus after thirteen years from the commencement, the house is painted outside. And this is all, except some slight repairs, which is on record, as having been attempted upon the first meeting-house to make it comfortable in its arrangement, and respectable in its appearance.

Soon after this time we find that there was a disaffec-

tion growing up towards Mr. Rogers, and so strong had it become, that on July 26, 1757, fourteen years after he was settled, a council was called by the church, Mr. Rogers not assenting, to consider the case. Why he should refuse to assent is not known, and it would be useless to conjecture. It may have been obstinacy — it may have been misjudgment — it may have been neither. The council consisted of fifteen churches. Mr. Rogers refused to unite with the church in laying the case before the council, and they proceed to consider the charges as an *ex parte* body. The first charge against him was, that the Rev. Mr. Rogers “did not hold or believe the essential divinity of Christ as it is revealed in the divine Word.” And the council unanimously judged that the aggrieved brethren had just reason to be dissatisfied with him on that point. The second charge related to his views of original sin, and the council decided that it appeared to them that “he denied the doctrine of original sin, both the imputation of the guilt and the corruption of our nature,” and that the aggrieved brethren had also just reason to be dissatisfied with him on this ground. The third charge related to his views of regeneration and conversion. And on those points also, the council declared that the church had occasion to be dissatisfied. The council also declare that they have abundant evidence that Mr. Rogers “hath cast most indecent, and unchristian

reflections on the shorter catechism of the venerable assembly of divines at Westminster ; and," they continue to say, "as is our incumbent duty, we recommend the use of it to all Christians." As however, the council did not wish to advise hasty measures, and an unnecessary separation between a pastor and his people, they recommend that the people should hear Mr. Rogers for the space of three months, at least, with candor, in the hope that he will modify, or change his opinions, so that they may be more in accordance with the gospel, and more acceptable to his church. In case he should not do it, they advise that the council be called together again. They close their proceedings by taking "the liberty to assure Mr. Rogers that it is with the uttermost regret that they have been obliged to make the remarks upon the doctrines he hath delivered from the pulpit and the press. They beg leave to assure him, that nothing but a full conviction that they are contrary to the gospel of Christ and subversive of the way of salvation," could have persuaded them to take these steps. The council, consisting of fourteen pastors and twenty-six delegates, was then dissolved or adjourned. What makes all these proceedings most painful, is, that some of the council held the same opinions of which they speak in this peculiarly strong style of reprobation. (f) There is a tradition that after this council, Mr. Rogers preached a sermon, from the words,

“Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth,” to explain more fully his views. But he does not seem to have succeeded in satisfying the disaffected portion of his people, for in November (16, 1757) we find that at a meeting of the church, of which Rev. Samuel Dunbar, a member of the former council, was chosen moderator, it was voted “to accept of the result of the venerable council which they called to advise them in their difficulty.” This appears to have been a second council, called after the three months’ probation had expired. On the same day that the church passed this vote, the town voted “that Rev. John Rogers desist from his pastoral office for the space of two months, next ensuing, and that the selectmen be a committee to supply the pulpit during that time.” This was undoubtedly the advice of the second council, alluded to in the vote of the church just mentioned, though no record of their proceedings exists; and the record of this vote of the church is in a new book, Mr. Rogers keeping the first church book in his own hands. And I may as well here, as anywhere, remark, that all the records of church meetings, after this period, except for the choice of a deacon, are torn out of Mr. Rogers’s church book. The author, or authors of this high-handed offence are not known. Nor are the records of Mr. Rogers’s precinct, formed in 1761, as far as I have been able to learn, anywhere in existence. It is from his enemies alone

that we derive information respecting himself and his friends. (g) Thrice, on as many Sundays, after his suspension, Mr. Rogers appeared at his meeting-house, and thrice was denied entrance into the pulpit. What efforts were made during these two months of Mr. Rogers's suspension from the ministry to produce union is not known ; there is no record of any action, either by church or town, till January 28, 1758,—the expiration of the two months, when it is voted, both in church and town, that Mr. Rogers be dismissed from his pastoral office. It is stated in the records that Mr. Rogers read, or caused to be read, a letter to the church at this meeting.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND BRETHREN :

I lament that we must be separated. I suffered and toiled with you to establish this church. Most of those who laid the foundation of this altar of God in the wilderness still stand with me. My enemies are mostly those who came among us, as strangers, whom we welcomed with a Christian affection to our table of communion, and house of worship ; but who have now ungratefully, like the serpent in the fable, bitten their benefactors. The council, too, which have advised you to this course, are not free from guilt. Some of them, and not a few, think as I do on those very doctrines which they pronounce so fatal, and which they call upon

me, in the pitiful tones of children, to renounce. I forgive them their sin. May God forgive them. Posterity will revise their decision, and judge their characters. I do not understand why I should be singled out, from the other ministers around me, to be made a victim. I differ from them in nothing without it is in frankly declaring what I do believe. Their opinions are like mine. I confess that, on some points, I have modified my opinions since I came among you ; and I am grieved to think that any are so simple as to suppose it an indication of mental weakness, or perfidy of heart, or treachery to duty, to grow wiser as one grows older, and studies longer. John Robinson warned his church to beware of thinking that no more light would beam out of the Word of God ; expressly warning them not to stick fast, as some did, where Calvin left the truth, but to follow on after more truth. Our covenant, it is true, implies the doctrine of the Trinity, but it does not require any one always to believe it ; it expressly exhorts us to study the Word of God both day and night, and to conform ourselves thereunto. I have done so. Am I guilty of a crime ? I am willing to be classed with Newton, and Milton, and Locke, and other good and great men, in the opinions which I hold. No one need be ashamed in their company. As for recanting my opinions, Christian friends, I cannot do it. God and my conscience would both condemn me. I could not

think of myself but with shame. My ancestor suffered the torture of fire, and death at the stake, rather than recant, or conceal his opinions; could I meet him in heaven without a blush, if I should deny what I believe to be God's truth? Could I answer to my Master, Christ? Judge ye. I lament to be cut off from you. I am poor, and know not where to go. My little ones cry around me for bread. Still I will trust in God, who has never yet forsaken me. He will care for me and mine. I hope, if you do expel me from the office of Pastor, that you will pay me what you owe me. For ten years I have been willing to share in your poverty, by not calling for a portion of my salary which is justly due to me. Now, if I am to be cast abroad upon the world, I feel as if I must be permitted to receive what is necessary to my very existence. But no more of this. The extremest want alone could have compelled me to mention it in this connection. Brethren, pause before you act. Consider, I pray you, what will be the end of these things; what will be thought of this after we are all in our graves. God give you wisdom to act in this matter, as you will all wish you had, when you stand in His presence to answer for this deed. And may the great Head of the Church keep you, and build you up in truth and holiness ever more.

Your devoted, yet aggrieved Pastor,

JOHN ROGERS.

The church, after the letter had been read, “Voted, that what Mr. Rogers had heretofore offered, and what he had now offered, was not satisfactory, and that, in accordance with the advice of the late council, he be dismissed from his pastoral office.” It would appear, that another council, making a third one on his case, had been held, or, perhaps, the same council met three times;—in July, advising the people to hear Mr. Rogers for three months, and counselling him to recant; the second, in November, advising the people to dismiss him for two months; and the third, in January, advising his entire and final separation from his people.

It is a matter of deep regret, that the doings of these two last councils are not in existence. The doings of the first are only preserved on a loose sheet of paper, no copy being entered on the church-book. Whether Mr. Rogers made a remonstrance before the town, or not, is not known. The people, who adhered to him, sent in, to the town-meeting which dismissed him, a spirited protestation against the anticipated action of the town. They declare the dismissal of Mr. Rogers “to be very unreasonable, inequitable, and unjust; so they do utterly protest against the town’s proceeding to act on the subject.” This remonstrance is signed by thirty-seven—eight of these were the original founders of the church. There were fifteen members of the church, besides Mr. Rogers, at its organization. Eight

of these—more than half of them—are among the remonstrants. Two of the four deacons were of the number : Jonathan White, first payer and first deacon, is one of them. But one-third of the founders of the church opposed Mr. Rogers. Two had died, probably, as their names are not mentioned in either church at this time. (g)

Strong feeling was excited by this act among the people ; and it soon began to manifest itself in open and expressive forms. Mr. Rogers continued to preach to his adherents, in a school-house, situated in the North Village, on the spot now occupied as a place of business by Mr. Leonard Burrage. Those who supported him were also obliged to pay taxes to support preaching in the old meeting-house. They felt the injustice of this ; and a suit was commenced by one of them, Thomas Legate, Esq., against the assessors, for taxing him. Many, if not all of them, had previously petitioned the town, to be excused from paying a tax to any but Mr. Rogers ; but the town denied the prayer of the petitioners. Mr. Rogers, also, commenced a suit against the town in 1759, for some portion of his salary, which, he alleged, had not been paid for the ten years since there had been sixty families in town. These law-suits and the excitement growing out of other circumstances, must have produced an intense ferment, and much bitterness. Members of the different congregations would

not speak to each other, or pass the common civilities of society. The old society, apparently feeling their weakness, proposed to leave the matter of payment to referees, and to have the seceders give up Mr. Rogers, and unite with them, in good faith, in settling another minister. This advancement towards a compromise was not accepted by Mr. Rogers's friends. The town then proposed a mutual council to Mr. Rogers; but he had had too much experience of the justice he was to expect from the hands of a council, to accept such a proposal. Mr. Rogers finally obtained a favorable decision in the higher court, having carried up his case from an adverse decision in the lower; and the town, apparently to avoid paying so large an amount as was required of them, entered, September, 1761, into a rule of court with Mr. Rogers and his adherents, according to which, the town should unite with them in a petition to the General Court, for an act of incorporation as a separate parish, or precinct; each party paying his own costs of court, and the town paying the second precinct forty-five pounds, lawful money, with interest, within two years. Twenty-seven persons petitioned to be incorporated into a second parish, and were so incorporated January 27, 1762, after a severe struggle of four years and a half. Five of these petitioners were among the founders of the church: Jonathan White, the first deacon, was of the number. (H)

During this controversy, the pulpit was supplied by various clergymen, only one of whom, Samuel Foxcroft, is named in the records of the town or church. The church invited him to be their pastor in 1760, but the town did not act on the subject till two years after. Hope deferred seems to have made his heart sick, for he declined a settlement so tardily offered. The church held several days of fasting during this period of strife. But it is to be feared that they were too often accompanied with the spirit of the two disciples at the Samaritan village. (1)

We have now arrived at a point where the town separated into two parishes, or precincts. There were, at this time, one hundred and seven families in town, and seven hundred and forty-three inhabitants. (j) Mr. Rogers continued to preach in the school-house to his few, but devoted, faithful adherents, till his body was bowed with the weight of years and cares, and his head white with the frosts of age. During the last years of his ministry he preached during the winter in his own house, which stood on the spot now occupied by the house of Deacon Moses Richardson. His infirmities became so great, that in 1788, after having ministered to his little flock twenty-six years, he desired to be excused from his labors, to which his people consented; and they generously voted to pay him his salary for three

years, fifteen pounds each year. (k) He did not live, however, but a short time after this arrangement. He died, the sixth of October, 1789, in the forty-seventh year of his ministry, and in the seventy-seventh year of his age. His remains lie in our burying ground, without a stone to mark their resting place, and his grave, like the old Patriarch's, is unknown, unto this day. (l) Thus labored, and suffered, and died, Rev. John Rogers, the first settled minister of this town. His labors appear to have been blessed by the Head of the Church. During these fourteen years, one hundred and six members united with the church, though a large proportion were by letter, and twenty-nine united with his church after the separation, in all, one hundred and thirty-five. There were, during his ministry, three hundred and fifty-eight baptisms, and seventy-three marriages. He was a descendant of John Rogers, the first martyr under Queen Mary. He was born in Boxford, September, 1712. He was the son of Rev. John Rogers of Boxford, who was the son of Jeremiah Rogers of Salem, who was the grandson, as is supposed, of Nathaniel Rogers of Ipswich, who came from England in 1636, and who was the second son of John Rogers of Dedham, England, who was the son of one of the ten children of John the martyr. (m)

Mr. Rogers was of middling stature, rather firmly built and somewhat bowed with years, near the close of his

life. He was elected to go as a delegate to the first meeting of the disaffected colony in Boston, in 1768, but declined attendance. He married Relief Prentice, daughter of the Rev. John Prentice of Lancaster, in March, 1750, after he had been in the ministry seven years. They had seven children. But one of his descendants, however, now resides in town, a great grandchild, the surviving daughter of the late Rufus Kendall. A brother, and two sisters married in town, and resided here during a part of his ministry. His father and mother, also, removed to this town from Boxford, and died here, the one in August (14), 1755, the other, December (23), 1757. His father has left a monument of his taste, and public spirit, in the noble elms which stand by the road-side as you ascend from the bridge in the North Village. It is not improbable that family influence may have been one cause of the difficulty with Mr. Rogers. At that period there was vastly more of family jealousy than there is at this time.

“Mr. Rogers was a man of intellectual power,” says Dr. Bancroft, in his half-century sermon, “and an inquisitive spirit, possessed of a name fitted to make a man independent in his opinions, and prepared to encounter every difficulty in defence of religious truth.” Whitney says, in his History of Worcester County, article *Leominster*, “the moral character of Mr. Rogers was never impeached. Had he lived in the present day [1793]

perhaps such a controversy would never have been heard of. His integrity and attachment to what he thought important truths were superior to the trials he met with, and by which persons of more easy virtue might have been overcome." "The Rev. John Rogers," says another writer, (*Ecclesiastical History of Sterling, Massachusetts, Worcester Magazine, August, 1826, p. 217*) "was a man of learning and great intrepidity of character, qualified by many circumstances, as well as by name, to be the first suffering confessor."

The opinions of Mr. Rogers, as far as they can be learned from documents which are left us respecting his difficulties with the town, were substantially such as more generally prevail in this church at the present time. He appears to have been an opponent of the doctrine of the Trinity, and all the five points of Calvinism. In his sermon on the "Nature and Necessity of Spiritual Conversion," (which is the only work he ever published, as far as I can learn, and a single copy of which, after much seeking, I have found,) he discloses some of his opinions, which gave offence to the council. He makes the following remarks in the dedication of the sermon :

"Neither the composer of this innocent discourse, nor, probably, any body else, would have desired, or thought of printing it; had not some persons in neighbouring towns industriously represented it as very bad, containing pernicious doctrine. For which reason it

comes to plead for itself ; desiring a just and fair trial, but no favor ; at least no partiality in its favor. Let it stand or fall, as it agrees or disagrees with truth. . . . Whoever shall either censure or approve, let him, in justice to himself, as well as to the truth, take for a standard, not any Decrees of men, but the Oracles of the true and living God, which abide forever ; for to these there must be a final appeal. If men judge not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them ; and it will certainly be taken as the only rule of religious faith, by all who receive it truly in love. This is the true Protestant Confession. This is the voice of reason. This is the voice of God.”

His text is Matthew xviii. 3 : *Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* He then defines conversion to be a forsaking of ignorance, error, and vice, effected by God’s holy Word and Spirit, in such a manner that man is moved as a rational creature, and not as the insensible parts of creation. “Some honest folks,” he says, “have imagined that in the work of conversion men *are* wholly passive. But such persons must be equally ignorant of human nature and divinity. The Spirit operateth by moral persuasion. Let no man deceive himself — we must convert (or turn) ourselves, else we shall never be converted : as we are in several places in Scripture expressly commanded to do this.

Original righteousness appeareth to be but a fancy, (for righteousness is positive action — not a state,) how much, and how long soever it hath been consecrated by great names and numbers of men, who have established it among the fundamentals of their religion. This would not need to be so much regretted if men would think for themselves, and allow their neighbors the same liberty, and not be perpetually condemning us because we cannot believe their absurdities. And yet it is a pity they can't be content with that number of articles which the Head of the Church hath assigned, but must needs be adding, till they have swelled their creed to an enormous size, the weight of which, both we and our fathers have been unable to bear."

Mr. Rogers distinctly avowed Arminian sentiments, as they were then called. He denies the inherent total depravity and disability of children — "Infants," he says, "neither commit, nor love iniquity." The whole discourse is written with uncommon energy and beauty for that age of the church. Mr. Rogers was probably the first of those who are now called Unitarian, in New England, who so openly preached his sentiments as to suffer for them the martyrdom of excision from his parish. As his great ancestor was the first martyr under the cruel reign of Queen Mary, and the predominance of the Roman Catholic power in old England, so he was the first martyr in New England to the same spirit

of exclusion, though manifested in that milder form, which the increased intelligence of society would alone permit, for cherishing opinions, many of which were as dear to the church which expelled him, and to his successor, their minister, after half a century, as to himself. Truth goes onward. Fires cannot consume it, nor walls confine it, nor power crush it. It rises from the ashes of martyrs, and the anathemas of the priesthood. "Anything else," says a writer, "you may subdue: you may conquer wind, water, nature herself; but to the progress of that secret, subtle, pervading power, their imagination can devise, their strength can make no bar. Its votaries they may seize, they may destroy, itself they cannot touch. If they check it in one place it invades them in another. They cannot build a wall across the earth, and even if they could, it would leap over its summit. Chains cannot bind it, for it is immaterial. Dungeons cannot enclose it, for it is omnipresent. Its home is the universe, its asylum the bosom of God." Men cannot put out the sun, or shut up the light, and they ought to bless God that they cannot, or the pall of universal darkness would be spread over the world. Goodness has inherent life; virtuous deeds do not die. He whose name is cast out as evil in one generation, will, often in the next, be blessed with a people's gratitude. The fragrance of a good name is wasted by the very breath, which would blast it, down

to coming ages. The graves of the moral heroes of the world may be in unconsecrated ground, yet they will be made sacred by the pilgrimages and tears of posterity. Contemporaries may make them desolate, and briars and thorns may be the only monument to mark their resting place. They will not so remain. Those, who honor integrity and love free thought, and speech, will plant their desolate graves with roses, and rear with thanksgiving a monument to their memory. Parents will lead their children to their burial place, and excite in their young hearts a love of duty, and inspire them with a purpose to discharge it earnestly and devotedly, by reciting the deeds and trials, the faithfulness and sufferings of the dead, with tears of gratitude and joy.

A noble self-sacrifice prompted the few, yet ardent friends of Mr. Rogers to support him after infirmity compelled him to cease from his labors; and many of them, for thirteen years after they had generously, from their poverty, aided the First Precinct in building a new meeting-house, still adhered to him with a childlike affection, and attended his humble place of worship, leaving it, at last, with tears of grief, when he announced to them that the infirmities of age forbade his attempting to break to them the bread of life any longer; thus honoring him by cleaving to him while living,—his memory was engraven on their hearts alone when dead. Let a grateful, and prosperous generation,

who are indebted to him for the maintenance of that liberty, and the defence of those opinions which are dear to their hearts, erect, as an expression of their own gratitude, and as a tribute due to his worth, and labors, and sufferings, in enduring rock, a monument to his memory. Let not the stranger longer search the resting-place of our dead in vain for the name, and monument of JOHN ROGERS.

I now return to trace the history of our ecclesiastical affairs in the First Precinct. At a meeting of the church held September 20, 1762, they made choice of Mr. Francis Gardner to be their minister. (1) And the town, October 5, united with them in their choice, giving him over one hundred pounds as a settlement, and sixty-six pounds thirteen shillings four pence, salary, so long as he shall be their settled minister. Mr. Gardner was ordained December 22, 1762. Rev. Mr. Harrington of Lancaster made the prayer ; Mr. Smith of Marlborough preached ; Mr. Gardner (father of the pastor) of Stow, gave the charge ; Mr. Goss of Bolton prayed after the charge ; and Mr. Swift of Acton gave the right-hand of fellowship. January 2, 1763, the second Sunday after Mr. Gardner was ordained, and the first Sunday that he preached, he took for his text, both forenoon and afternoon, Ezekiel iii. 17, 18. [Buss's manuscript Journal].

Before Mr. Gardner's settlement the church took

measures to secure themselves from erroneous opinions. A new covenant was drawn up stating the doctrine of the Trinity in a strong manner, and pledging the members “to stand together in resisting all doctrines that tend to undermine the true Deity, or Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, or that tend to advance man’s innocency by nature, and to eclipse the sovereignty, freeness, and efficiency of Divine grace in election, vocation, and justification, the whole of salvation both begun and perfected being only of grace, without any regard had to good foreseen in man, or willed by him.” The covenant is signed by twenty-three persons, three of whom were original members of the church. After Mr. Gardner’s ordination, it was signed by sixty-one. (n) Soon after this time, April 14, 1765, the reading of the Scriptures was introduced, as a part of the exercises on Sunday. There is no record or tradition that this innovation produced any excitement or opposition. Five years after Mr. Gardner’s settlement (1767) a movement was made to build a new meeting-house. For six years the town were considering the subject before it was determined to build. The breaking out of the revolutionary war, and the difficulty of agreeing upon a suitable location, seem to have been the efficient causes of delay, especially the latter. After agitating the question of its location for some time very ardently, it was determined to place the house upon the land of

Rufus Haughton, which was on the eastern part of the present common. After some difficulty about whether there should be three porches or two, and how the pews should be disposed of, it was determined to have but two porches, and to sell the pews from a plan drawn before the house was built. None were allowed to buy pews but voters, or freeholders, and no one could buy but one pew; a third part of the price to be paid on raising the house, another third part when it was covered, and the remaining third when it should be finished. The members of Mr. Rogers's society wished to buy pews in the new house; and they were finally permitted to do so, and to vote, in matters relating to building the house, in the same manner as the members of the first parish. It shows the desire of all parties to sustain the institutions of religion, thus to aid and fellowship each other. Mr. Rogers's people seem to have been willing to help build a house, though it proved to be thirteen years before they were dissolved as a society and worshiped in it. (o) To properly understand the effort which was made to build this house, it must be remembered that the Revolution was now commencing, and the town were making generous appropriations for their country's defence. Their burdens must have been extremely heavy. And their perseverance in erecting a house of worship is worthy of our gratitude as well as imitation.

Whitney, in History of Worcester County, calls it “a large and elegant meeting-house.” There appears to have been no serious difficulty growing out of its erection, although the town was called together a marvellous number of times to consider the matter, before the work was commenced, and after it was in progress. The town did not seem willing to trust a committee to do anything. After the lapse of eight years from the time the subject was first agitated, and two years and a half after the town had voted to build a house, the work was finished, August, 1775.

The memory of some of my hearers is familiar with this house — its congregation, minister, and services. The clapping of the seats after prayers ; the old square pews, in the centre the grandfather’s chair ; the body seats before the pulpit, and the deacon’s seat under it ; the gallery, carefully adapted to accommodate the purposes of the young, and the negro-pews placed high in two of the corners ; the deacons in their wigs, seated under the pulpit ; the reading and lining of the hymns by these officers of the church ; the wig, the three-cornered hat, the bands, the small clothes, and high-topped boots of the pastor ; the chills and shiverings of winter ; — all these some of you have seen, and heard, and felt. The spirit of peace seemed to be in the midst of the town, after this time. The people of Mr. Rogers’s precinct had returned to the society ; and once more, in 1788,

after a period of twenty-six years, the town became one parish. The town agreed to pay the Second Precinct thirty pounds, in annual instalments of fifteen pounds each, the first to be paid before the last of March, 1788. Some of the members of Mr. Rogers's church, not wishing to sign the new covenant, were received without signing it; an instance of liberality worthy of being specially noted, as showing that in less than thirty years the links of an iron creed rust off.

An occasional instance of church discipline is mentioned. Serene and peaceful, however, appears to have been the condition of the church, and I believe not an instance of excommunication is on record. This fact, if it be not indicative of the purity of the church, is a proof which cannot be mistaken, of its charity and forbearance, virtues not often in too high repute.

After the meeting-house had been built eighteen years it was repainted, and an effort was made to build a steeple, but it never was done. The depreciation of money, during the war, reduced the salary of Mr. Gardner to a mere pittance, and he petitioned, in 1791, for an increase; but the town seem, also, to have felt their own poverty, and declined, notwithstanding the urgent request on Mr. Gardner's part, to do anything on the subject for three years, when they vote to give him thirteen pounds six shillings and eight pence, on condition of his acquitting the town of all claims. From

this time, for twenty years, until the death of Mr. Gardner, in 1814, the town made, almost every year, an addition to the salary, making it, usually, three hundred and fifty, and in one instance, four hundred dollars for a year. The money which was paid in these early times was not all which the minister received from his people. His barn was filled with hay, his yard with wood, his cellar with food convenient for him, a free-will offering of his parishioners. So that the amount of the salary is no test of the amount received from a parish during the early period of the town.

In 1791, it was proposed to place a stove in the church, but it was refused; and, notwithstanding repeated efforts afterwards made, no means of warming the second meeting-house were adopted. So terribly severe was the cold, that in 1808, the town voted to have but one service on Sunday, during the winter season, from the first of December to the first of April.

Rev. Francis Gardner died June 4, 1814, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, and the fifty-second of his ministry. He is remembered by many of you. On many of you he set the seal of baptism. Many of you he united in the holy joys of domestic life. During Mr. Gardner's ministry, three hundred and fourteen were admitted to the church, fifteen hundred and twenty-four were baptized. There were four hundred and ten marriages. I know of but two publications of

**Mr. Gardner's. His Half Century Sermon, 1812, and
a Thanksgiving Sermon, November 19, 1795.**

During this period a change was made in the mode of reading the hymns. Before this time the hymns had been read by one of the deacons. The minister now read them. This innocent, and valuable change, like all changes, was, by some, considered an intolerable desecration of worship. And on one occasion, when the minister commenced reading the hymn, one of the deacons, in a spirit very unbecoming his office, left the house. Another deacon refused to read when called upon to do so by Rev. Mr. Adams of Lunenburg, who did not like the change, and undertook to exercise authority out of his jurisdiction. The introduction of instrumental music, especially of a violin, caused some dissatisfaction; and the deacon first alluded to, Israel Nichols, repeated the manifestation of his displeasure, as the musician began to play upon it, by again leaving the house, with a firm, and measured step.

Notwithstanding the strength of the covenant, Mr. Gardner appears to have used his freedom and talents in religious investigations; and the conclusions to which he arrived were such as were to be expected. He says, in the Half Century Sermon, before alluded to, "that two things have been particularly agreeable to him in the course of his ministry; — the candor with which his people had attended upon his administrations,

and the little attention they had paid to those rambling preachers who go about to promote discord, and confusion." Dr. Thayer, in a sermon preached at the funeral of Mr. Gardner, says, "he viewed as of minor importance the speculations of men. He had a single eye to the investigation of truth. As an adviser in controversy he was happily free from precipitancy and prejudice." Mr. Gardner was the son of the Rev. Mr. Gardner of Stow, and was born February 29, 1736. He graduated at Cambridge 1755. He was settled at the age of 26, at a time when there was great excitement, and when great prudence was necessary. The results of his ministry testify to the general judiciousness of his administrations. Notwithstanding the church, in the heat of excitement, attempted to bind themselves and him to old opinions, liberality extended, opinions were modified, and in about fifty years the creed, which a temporary ebullition of feeling framed, and which was set aside, more than once in practice before Mr. Gardner's decease, was changed to meet the wants of changed opinions, teaching us the utter inability of articles of faith to bind the human mind. The remains of Mr. Gardner lie in our burying ground, over which a table was erected by the town to commemorate his valuable services, and to express their gratitude and respect for him.

After the death of Mr. Gardner a day of fasting was appointed, September 5, 1814, in consequence of being

destitute of a minister, and on account of prevailing sickness; and the church likewise chose a committee to examine the two covenants;— one used by Mr. Rogers, and the other drawn up by the church before Mr. Gardner's settlement, which was then in use. The committee reported that a new covenant should be formed. A committee, consisting of nine members, was chosen to draw it up. After the ordination of Mr. Gardner's successor, he was added to the committee. The result of their labors was a covenant requiring confession to no doctrines which are not received by all Christians. It abolished the half-way covenant, as it was called, by assenting to which, persons had, heretofore, received baptism and still declined to come to the communion table. There is no allusion in it to the doctrine of the Trinity, or any one of the five points of Calvinism. It is entirely liberal in its sentiments.

In January, 1815, seven months after Mr. Gardner's death, the church, by a vote of twenty-two to eleven, voted to consider Mr. Thomas Prentiss as their gospel minister. But the town, the next month did not concur;— voting one hundred and eighteen against, and fifty-two for him. (q) In February the church voted, thirty-one to twelve, to make choice of Rev. William Bascom as their minister, and in March the town concur, one hundred and ninety-seven for, twenty-five against.

He declined the first offer of five hundred and fifty dollars for his salary, and accepted the second offer of six hundred. He was installed May 10, 1815, eleven months after the death of Mr. Gardner. Rev. James Murdock of Princeton preached the sermon. The character of the discourse must have startled those who had so recently drawn up a liberal covenant, and which the pastor himself aided in revising, and soon after assented to. (r) The town, after some hindrances and opposition, voted to introduce Worcester's Collection of Hymns, and made various endeavors during Mr. Bascom's ministry to enlarge the meeting-house, or build a new one; but in vain. A site, however, was purchased by the town, on which the present house stands. (s)

The town and church soon began to express dissatisfaction with Mr. Bascom. Some of them, finding his opinions different from what they had supposed them to be, thought he had deceived them; others knew that such were his opinions when he came among them, and, on that ground, opposed his settlement. A majority were dissatisfied. Those who thought they had been deceived, and those who had opposed him from the beginning, constituting his opponents. His ministerial arrangements were not thought judicious—meetings and services were introduced, unknown before among the people, which were unsatisfactory to many. The

matter was finally brought before the town, and by a vote of seventy-two to fifty-nine, dissatisfaction was expressed, and a committee was chosen to confer with Mr. Bascom, and draw up a list of grievances. After an interchange of many letters, and several unsuccessful attempts at an arrangement, Mr. Bascom finally asked a dismission, and the town vote to dismiss him, giving him two hundred dollars and his salary from that time, February 17, 1820, to May 10, 1820, the close of his year. A council was convened, and the connection between Mr. Bascom and the church was dissolved, March 2, 1820, after a ministry of five years. Mr. Bascom had been settled at Fitchburg as a liberal man, in opposition to Rev. Mr. Barton, who was exclusive and denunciatory. Many of those who were most anxious for his settlement here, were not aware that while he was at Fitchburg he had changed his opinions and was becoming exclusive in his exchanges. These persons felt that Mr. Bascom had deceived them, and were among the first and most active in his removal. If it were through any want of caution on their part that they were deceived, they still felt that there had been a want of explicitness on his part before his ordination ; so that, although Mr. Bascom could prove that he preached the same doctrines at Fitchburg during a part of his ministry, which he preached here, it, in their view, only more deeply convicted him of concealment

when he came. It is evident, furthermore, that the town had no desire to present the course of their pastor in any unfavorable light; they wished to induce him to ask a dismission without compelling them to make and prove specific charges; hence the opposition took the ground most favorable possible to Mr. Bascom, and least favorable, except in a moral point of view, to the town.

Still much unkind feeling was excited, and unquestionably some unchristian spirit was exhibited. Many of the actors are in their graves, and the survivors are now venerable with age — it becomes us to speak with candor of actions which they must have performed, oftentimes, under a great degree of personal feeling, and with but little time for reflection. Perhaps such connections are not usually dissolved under such circumstances, with less bitterness, or more general good judgment, and fairness, and tenderness towards the feelings of the parties concerned, than was this. Let the evil be forgotten. During Mr. Bascom's ministry of five years, forty-one were admitted to the church, seventy-two were baptized, and there were fifty-eight marriages.

During his ministry, also, a Sunday School was opened, the first effort of the kind in town. Immediately after Mr. Bascom's settlement, the church raised, by contribution, a sum sufficient to add seven silver

cups for the communion table, which, together with one before presented by Bazaleel Lawrence, Esq., constitute the eight cups now used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The church are indebted to the oldest officer of the church for the baptismal font.

After Mr. Bascom left, it was to be expected that a wider and wider separation would take place between the different parties in the church and society. Efforts were making in different parts of the commonwealth to divide churches and break up parishes — and clergymen of great influence in city and country declared that there should be a church of their own faith in every town in the commonwealth.

In establishing them in many places little regard was paid to the capacity or character of the agitators. The end to be attained was a new society, and a church that might hurl its anathemas and breathe its suspicions against all who were not gathered into its fold, or who opened their arms to welcome all humble disciples without regard to their opinions. The means to be used were any instrumentalities which would attain the desired end, with but little regard, too often, to the Christian temper, or the courtesies which belong to ordinary life and the intercourse of neighbors. When such means were in agitation all through the State, it is not wonderful that, to a certain extent, they were felt here.

But unless I mistake, they were here manifested in a somewhat milder form than in some other places.

It was under such circumstances within, and such influences without, that the church proceeded, in October 23, 1820, about seven months after Mr. Bascom's dismission, to give Rev. Abel Conant an invitation to become their pastor. Rev. David Damon had preached in town before Mr. Conant, much to the satisfaction of the people, and arrangements were made to give him a call, but measures were suspended upon learning that the people of Lunenburg had already notified a meeting for the same purpose. In November 6, 1820, the town concurred with the church in inviting Mr. Conant to be their minister, "one hundred and twenty-one voting in favor, and none against." They also offered him as salary, six hundred dollars a year, and gave him three Sundays annually for his own use. Mr. Conant accepted the call, and was ordained the 24th of January, 1821, Rev. Humphrey Moore of Milford, N. H., preaching the sermon. The severity of the cold on that occasion is well remembered by many of you. (u)

Immediately after Mr. Conant's settlement, the question of building a new meeting-house on the land which the town had purchased for that purpose was agitated; and in December (8, 1821) the town voted to build a new house. Such undertakings are always attended with more or less danger of creating dissatisfaction in a

society ; and in the present condition of the minds and feelings of people, might appear peculiarly calculated to produce division. But such does not seem to have been the result. The house was finished without any of those agitations respecting its construction and location, and the disposal of the pews, which usually accompany such proceedings, and was finally dedicated, October 15, 1823, the pastor preaching from Acts xi. 26, "*And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*" This house has, therefore, been erected almost twenty years. The town were indebted to the generosity and public spirit of one of its citizens, the late Joel Crosby, Esq., for the donation of a bell which, to this day, on every Sabbath morning, invites us, by its musical tones, to the worship of God. The pews sold for sixteen hundred dollars more than the cost of the house, which was eight thousand dollars. A portion of this money was applied to the purchase of an organ, which was soon after placed in the house. (v)

As early as the ministry of Mr. Bascom, we find in the church records some intimations of the existence of Baptist views in the church. At a meeting of the church in 1817, a brother stated his scruples about the validity of his infant baptism, expressing his doubts of his privilege to sit at the communion table under such circumstances — and desired to be excused from so doing for a short time. His request was cordially

granted. About a month afterwards the same brother desired "to receive a dismission from the church and recommendation." The church took the subject into consideration, and two months after voted, that as the brother had, as they believed, conscientiously connected himself with a church of another denomination of Christians, (Baptist) they should consider him as no longer under the special watch and care of this church.

In 1822, application was made to the church by Caleb Wood, and seventeen others,—six males and twelve females,— "to be dismissed from this church, and recommended to the fellowship of other churches, or to the aid of such ministers as may hereafter be invited to organize them into a church by themselves." Their reason for this request was, that they felt dissatisfied with the preaching of the pastor. "He fails to preach," say they, "those fundamental doctrines which we esteem the sincere milk of the Word, and therefore essential to our growth in grace, and to the everlasting good of ourselves and of our children." The church raised a committee to consider this request. In their report they express their regret that any should attempt to decide against the Christian integrity of individuals simply on the ground of belief, or consider doctrines as fundamental, that is, essential to salvation, and the very existence of the Christian system, which the Bible does not make such. They express their regret that each

one cannot adopt such views as he may think correct, and permit to others the same privilege, and still keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. "As no special doctrines are named," say the committee, "and as the usage of congregational churches has not been such as the brethren and sisters who made the request desire to be adopted, it is hoped they will still remain; if, however, they cannot be reconciled, any request, which is made in conformity with the usage of congregational churches, shall be suitably attended to." In September the petitioners presented a request for a mutual council; but the church decided, that as there were "no specific charges made" it would not be in accordance with congregational usage, and declined to act in the case. An *ex parte* council was, however, called, and a new church, composed of a part of the petitioners, was organized, this church at the same time remonstrating against the proceedings. This church considered the acts of the council uncongregational; and, hence, that the church organized by them was not established according to usage and, on that ground, declined, for a time, to recommend members to that church. It was, however, the custom, at that time of this church, and has been ever since, to dismiss and recommend members to churches of other denominations.

Much feeling was excited at the time by these move-

ments ; but it has now subsided. That there was nothing wrong done on either side, I suppose, that those who were actors in the events, who are now living, would not claim. That there was as little ill feeling excited, and as little injustice done as ever were, under such circumstances, is more, perhaps, than it would be best to say, or believe. But one thing may be said, with undoubting confidence : the ill feelings, which were awakened at that time, have been buried in the graves of those who have died, and in the memories of those who are living. And, probably, but few societies, which once stood in the hostile attitude which these, at that time assumed, have more entirely forgotten their strifes, and are united in more cordial, mutual respect, — would it were Christian fellowship. But let us not grieve for what is wanting. Let us rejoice that peace was so soon restored, and is so firmly established ; and that such harmony now exists. It should be mentioned to the honor of both. Long may it continue ; may it continue to become less and less discordant, so that what is now so cordially rendered to each other as men may, with equal cordiality, be rendered to each other as Christians, members of the same body, of which Christ is the Head. May the revolving years soon come freighted with this blessing.

These years of separation and strife, were years of severe trial in the ministry of my predecessor. His ear

was pained. His soul was sick. Still he continued his ministrations, and with success. Nothing specially eventful transpired during the remainder of his ministry. It was attended with the common trials, and joys, and successes of the office. In 1832, a new church covenant was drawn up. It is the admirable one which is now used by us, — admirable, both for the liberality of its opinions, and the propriety with which they are expressed. The remaining articles for the communion service were procured in the commencement of his ministry.

A Sunday school was in operation for about the last ten years of Mr. Conant's ministry. The superintendents, three in number, were chosen by the congregation; and the Library, then called Juvenile Library, composed of secular as well as religious works, was kept part of the time out of the meeting-house, and was open to all who were pleased to take books. Each class was accustomed to leave the meeting-house as soon as it had done reciting its lesson. Mr. Conant gave expository lectures to the teachers and such others as were disposed to attend, during some seasons, late on Sunday afternoon, during the period the school continued open.

A change was made, also, in the hymn books, used by the congregation, during Mr. Conant's ministry. Worcester's Collection gave place to Dr. Greenwood's.

Some few were dissatisfied with the change. But no serious evils have ever resulted, and it continues with us unto this day, to aid us in our worship by elevating our devotions with its beautiful expressions of gratitude, penitence, and praise.

Notwithstanding the organization of new Societies and churches,—Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, and Universalist,—the town acted for the First Congregational Society, till May, 1835, when the society was organized. The numbers of the society were large, and the members remarkably united. (w)

In the autumn of 1836, Mr. Conant was attacked with disease, and died December 6, aged forty-three, in the fifteenth year of his ministry. During this period one hundred and eight members united with the church; one hundred and ninety-one were baptized;—one hundred and seventy-two children, nineteen adults. There were, during the same period, one hundred and sixty marriages. Soon after Mr. Conant's decease, the society erected a suitable granite monument over his grave. His funeral discourse was preached by the Rev. Peter Osgood of Sterling; it was not printed, though a copy was requested for the press.

Rev. Abel Conant was born in Milford, New Hampshire, July 17, 1793. He graduated at Dartmouth college, 1815, at the age of twenty-two. He spent nearly four years, succeeding his graduation, as a teacher in

Groton academy, and was settled here in the ministry at the age of twenty-seven. I am not aware that he published anything except the sermons which he delivered on leaving the old meeting-house, and entering the new, 1823, and his address on temperance. He was, for many successive years, chairman of the school-committee. His sermons were more characterized by strength than beauty — more abounding in reasoning than illustration. Sound sense, with but little rhetorical embellishment, composed his discourses. His capabilities to prepare for the pulpit were very great. He seldom exchanged ; for the last year of his ministry, I am told, not once, — and rarely caused his people to complain that he had brought out of his treasure something old. He seldom repeated a sermon. A constitutional delicacy, and modesty, which grew into a firm habit, and his strong love of the quiet and pleasures of domestic life, especially the endearments of his own home, caused him to associate less with his people and the neighboring clergymen than most others of his profession are accustomed to do. He died in maturity of manhood — he was cut off in the strength of his years, and wisdom. Let his memory be blessed.

Near the close of Mr. Conant's ministry, by the will of the late Joel Crosby, Esq., the deacons of the church, as trustees, received a donation of one thousand dollars, the interest of which was to be appropriated to the sup-

port of the parish, and, by the same will, three hundred dollars was given for the purchase and erection of a clock in the tower of the meeting-house. The clock was not erected till the spring of 1837. The fund became available in 1838.

For six months after Mr. Conant's decease the pulpit was supplied by several different clergymen. In June, 1837, the society and church acting as one body, invited Mr. Henry A. Walker to become their minister. He declined the invitation ; owing, I suppose, to the smallness of the vote by which he was invited. This small vote was occasioned by the dissatisfaction of some with his opinions,—and the fear of others that his health would not permit him to perform the labors of so large a society. This fear was unquestionably well founded, for he died a few months after. (x)

In July of the same year, your present pastor came into the place, and preached four Sundays. The society met the Monday after his engagement expired, and voted to invite him to remain with them as their minister. The call was accepted ; and he was ordained the 20th of September, 1837. (y)

Thus six years of my ministry closed the last week, and this day is my anniversary. I shall be excused, therefore, I trust, if I dwell more at length upon my own ministry, than its connection with this centennial discourse would, under other circumstances, for a moment justify.

To determine the answer I ought to give to the invitation of the society was a difficult and trying act for me. The very fact that I was invited to this pulpit with an enthusiastic unanimity only deepened my solicitude, for I knew very well that the love of some, I feared of many, would soon grow cold. Notwithstanding strong reasons for declining the invitation, I thought there were stronger ones for accepting it, and did so.

After my acceptance of the invitation, and before my ordination, an elegant Oxford Bible was presented to the society for the use of the pulpit, by a native, and former resident of the town now living, and who had been a worshipper in this congregation. The clock, also, in front of the gallery was given the society by Joseph Woodard, Esq., an aged gentleman, then residing with one of the congregation. In 1838, an aged member of the society and church, made a donation of a thousand dollars for the support of a "settled minister" in the society. So that there is now a fund of two thousand dollars, the interest of which has been available since 1839, relieving the people of some of the burden of sustaining religious institutions. Perhaps this fund is as large as is desirable in a society where the expenses are no greater than in ours. I have always considered a large fund as an evil. A people should usually support the preaching of the gospel among them, or do as much as that in some form, by their own efforts, if they would be profited by it.

Immediately after my settlement the society raised, by subscription among its members, a generous sum for my immediate use in balancing my worldly affairs ; and paid me my salary semiannually in advance, that I might escape the pressure of want. For these acts of kindness I was then, and am still grateful. Nor must I fail to mention the liberality of an aged lady of the church, who generously made me a life member of the American Bible Society ; or the kindness of the Ladies' Benevolent Association, in making me a life member of the American Unitarian Association.

The history of my own ministry you all know. Some, as I expected, grew cold, a few grew hostile ; most of both these classes have withdrawn from the society. I see, however, but little change in the numbers of the audience. Nor should I expect to, as most who went out from us, were not of us, in the matter of attending worship,—and some few, literally, never did belong to the society,—observing the wise counsel of Solomon respecting contention, they let us alone before they had meddled with us. Some have changed their place of worship, either through change of opinions, or change of circumstances, in all good faith and honesty. May the blessing of God attend them all. The number of the nominal members of the society is diminished. I think, however, that the unity and increased energy which remain, far overbalance the numbers and sup-

port which we have lost ; for the strength of a society consists, not so much in numbers, as in the spirit which pervades it. But of this I speak not further. I rejoice, however, that none but those who please, contribute to my support ; and that those who do not choose to remain with us, can, and do withdraw.

In the early part of my ministry some of the members of the parish thought that it would be expedient to put blinds on the meeting-house, and I desired myself that the pulpit might be somewhat altered, to make it easier speaking from it, as well as more convenient for those who sat near it. Immediately a subscription was started, and nearly enough was raised, in a short time, to cover the expense ; and our church is rendered far more beautiful thereby, and much more convenient for a speaker as well as for a portion of the hearers. The unsettled condition of pastors at the present day served, also, to render it expedient that the parish, or members of it, should have in their possession a house which they could furnish to a minister ; as no minister in these unstable times would think of possessing one himself, even if one were found able to do it. An effort was made to secure such a dwelling — one which should be convenient for a parsonage — and it was done. Two thousand six hundred dollars were raised by subscription in a short time for this purpose, and such a place is secured. This effort is indicative of the spirit and

activity and strength of the society. But this is not all. Immediately upon this, a debt of two thousand dollars — the amount promised in 1816 for the purchase of a site for a church, now due — was found to be owed by the society. They felt that the apostolic injunction, “owe no man anything,” was applicable, with special power, to a religious society. Six hundred dollars were raised by a tax, and one thousand dollars were generously and promptly subscribed by individuals to liquidate the claim. So that within the short space of two years, the society have raised more than four thousand dollars, over and above the payment of their ordinary expenses. No such effort in the common procedure of affairs will be again required of us. If it should be, the past is prophetic of what we may expect will be the result. To see such energy, displayed by such an almost universal spontaneousness of action in the removal of a debt not anticipated, and which was contracted a quarter of a century ago, must have convinced any trembling spirit — if any such there were — that there was still youthful strength in the society, although it could look upon four other churches and congregations which had gone out from it.

The society has always been liberal in its support of the singing, raising from fifty to seventy-five dollars annually for that purpose ; and the taste which has been exercised in that department of our worship has

been very beneficial to our services. Very much depends upon the execution of this portion of our worship. The congregation, since I have been connected with it, has been very generous in its contributions to all objects which I have presented for its support. Especially has the Sunday School Library received your aid. This Library was thoroughly examined in the commencement of my ministry, and the secular books removed. It now contains several hundred volumes of the most valuable popular religious works, of which the people generally would do well to avail themselves. The Sunday School was, also, reorganized in the spring of 1838, and its members were greatly increased. It has ever since been large in numbers and prosperous in condition. Teachers' meetings have been held, since my settlement, once a fortnight, through the year, with good attendance, and not without benefit. The constancy, devotedness, and efficiency of the teachers demands and receives my grateful acknowledgments. Some of them, in the beauty, freshness, and strength of life's morning, have gone to their reward, but their memories are cherished in grateful and affectionate hearts. (z)

When I became pastor of this church there were in town one hundred and six members. Since that time one hundred and five have united with it. May the lives of those who survive be patterns of excellence and piety,—may the memory of those who are dead

excite us to more activity and faithfulness. I have baptized forty-one children and fifty-one adults—in all ninety-two. I have performed sixty marriage ceremonies. I have attended one hundred and twenty-three funerals. The whole number of persons who have united with this church during the century is seven hundred and two,—baptisms, two thousand two hundred and fifteen,—marriages, seven hundred and fifteen. The average number yearly that united with the church during Mr. Rogers's ministry of forty-six years, was three,—during the fifty-two years of Mr. Gardner's, six,—during the five of Mr. Bascom's, eight,—during the fifteen of Mr. Conant's, seven,—during the last six years, seventeen.

I have not been prevented by sickness from preaching for a single Sunday, nor have I in but one instance failed to preach during the day for six years; a friend on that occasion supplied my pulpit. That I have done all my duty I should not dare to say. That it has been my endeavor to do it, I can declare most confidently.

The present age is one of peculiar trials to the ministry, and I have not escaped them, nor did I expect that I should. An amount of *intellectual* labor is demanded which but few minds can perform, and many, if not most ministers, break down under the weight of it—and yet there is no relaxation of calls for pastoral duties. Formerly each church had an elder, as well as

a teacher. He made the pastoral calls. But now the crushing weight of both offices is thrown upon the shoulders of one mortal man. Unless his constitution be of iron, or he neglect some of his labors, he will sink under the burden. I do not complain of this, however. I am willing to labor to the last drop of my strength. But sometimes, even then, I cannot do what I would. The shadows of Saturday evening sometimes fall, and after a week of struggle I have produced nothing worthy of your attention, or which I am willing to bring into the pulpit. Such a week's work is a world's weight on the soul. Toil — tears — prayers will not at such times open the treasury of thought, and knowledge, and imagination. My hearers, you do not know, and I pray you never may know, how much more labor it may cost, at one time, to write a poor sermon than at another to write a good one ; nay, how much harder, oftentimes, it is after long, painful, patient trial, to write none at all, than at other times to write a number of them. Your pastor sometimes labors the hardest when he accomplishes the least. Poor sermons are not always the result of indolence. No effort will, in unpropitious hours, awaken a free, fresh, powerful flow of thought. But I forbear. I am not here this day to remove the veil from a preacher's heart and study — and to recount my own labors, failures, and successes in the privacy of my library. I came up hither this day to speak of your

fathers, — to recount their deeds, their trials, their sacrifices in establishing and sustaining religious institutions. I have done so, as far as my means and time permitted. I have done what I could to rescue their acts from oblivion. The exceeding meagerness of the early records has rendered my labor somewhat trying to my patience, as its results may have been to yours. Still it is pleasant, sometimes, to rub the moss from the monumental stone, and study letter by letter, line by line, the epitaph.

I would close this already protracted discourse upon our ecclesiastical history by briefly calling your attention to the value of your religious institutions, and some of the difficulties which attend them and a minister's labors, which are peculiar to this period, and which a people can do much to remove, or modify.

The value of your religious institutions is to be found in their inherent worth, and in the toil with which they have been established. This toil I have already related to you; I need not allude to it further. The value of a thoroughly educated, permanent, devoted ministry, such as you have always desired, if you have not attained it, you will understand if you will but look at those societies which are rent in twain by fanaticism, and the propagation of errors which are a disgrace to an enlightened age, to a community having common schools, and common sense. How often is the proverb,

“*If the blind lead the blind,*” fulfilled before our eyes. Nothing produces nothing. This axiom of philosophy is especially true of the ministry, and we need not go far to see its proof. Knowledge and devotion must join hands would you not cause an universal conflagration. The temptation among a certain class, is to undervalue solid learning. Sober, sound sense is little esteemed by such. They estimate the value of a teacher as a manufacturer does his power, by the *volume* of his voice, not by the sense of his remarks. Beware of this evil. Honor sound learning in a minister. Be not satisfied with the blowing of the wind. Never place a man in the desk who has not thoroughly explored the depths of theology and science, and general literature. Do not choose for yourselves a teacher who knows no more than yourselves, upon the subject which he is to discuss. Such an one can teach you nothing, and you would soon despise him, and you ought to do so. Quackery may be borne anywhere else better than in the pulpit. Having chosen a true man, bid him go to his labor. Do not chain him. Give him freedom; otherwise you will have no free thoughts. He will not always preach what you believe, but he will always say something which is worthy of your consideration. I thank you for not attempting to abridge my liberty. I may have used it too freely. Something is to be pardoned in that direction when so many societies are

attempting to muzzle the mouths of their ministers,—especially those which are inappropriately called free churches. Men are dictated to about what they shall pray for, and preach upon, and are allowed no freedom of choice whatever. Those who cry the loudest for liberty would make the ministry their slaves. Unless one bows to the dictation of conventions, and examines the last resolves of an association to learn his duty, and what he may say, he is in peril when he enters the pulpit. It is not strange, then, if I may have maintained my independence with too much sensitiveness. Let a people be like a wall of fire round their pastor to protect his entire freedom, then he will utter oracles worthy their hearing, and remembrance. A man who puts himself under the pupilage of one, or all of his society, is worthless. I have already alluded to the excessive labors demanded by the study, and the fire-side, and sick-bed upon a minister of this day; that they are crushing, no one can deny. The preparation for the pulpit is rendered more arduous than ever before, by the general diffusion of knowledge among the people, and the lectures of real excellence delivered by literary and scientific men. Time and care being devoted to these lectures they take from the power of the discourses delivered from the pulpit, unless they are composed with equal care. But how can a man, who is compelled to write one and two sermons every week, amidst all

the perplexities and labors of his pastoral office, his mind jaded, and prostrated, and empty of all ideas by previous exhaustion, — expect to compete with those performances, prepared at leisure, when the mind is free, only taxed for its resources when it is full to brimming, and when it would burst, were it not relieved? Yet it must be done. The pulpit must not fall one jot or tittle behind them. Its daily toil must equal the beauty, richness, and raciness of the annual, or holiday efforts of others. I do not complain of this state of things. I rejoice that men will no longer be satisfied with mere common-place remarks in the pulpit. It is a good sign. Better for a preacher to die under a dispensation of excessive labor, than anointed dulness. Better be worn out under the wheel of the polisher than be eaten out by the rust of inactivity. Still the labor is excessive, and a people must judge righteous judgment of their minister; they must not compare efforts which he is compelled to make weekly with those which other men make annually, or semi-annually. They will aid him much by speaking, and thinking judiciously of his efforts. And they will do this if they remember the uninterrupted draft that is made upon his mental resources. This labor is made still more severe by the pastoral labors of a minister. He is expected to visit his people much. And some of his parishioners will hint unkind things, if a greater interval intervenes between his calls

than usual, or than they think should intervene. Much may be done to aid a minister by the activity of laymen. They may visit the sick, and pray with the bereaved, and converse with the inquiring. Religious persons in a society can bear part of this burden. Would they but do it the pastor would not so soon be broken down under the pressure of these duties, nor would the sorrowful, bereaved, and sick, be so often neglected as they now sometimes are, because a human being does not possess the attribute of omnipresence. It would be well, if our parishes wish for the services of their pastor long, and would not follow him to an early grave, to aid him in these labors, by personal efforts to visit those who need Christian sympathy.

Another trial of a minister, and peril to religious institutions, is that inconstancy of attendance which he so often is pained, yet compelled to witness among his people. An unfavorable atmosphere, a cloudy sky, a threatening storm too often detain a large portion of a congregation at home. This is like iron in the soul of a minister. He has toiled all the week, his heart has broken, almost, with anxiety, and why should he not be in despair, when he sees the seats vacant, and even familiar faces wanting? Or it may be that some new teacher of some new doctrine, which is a cure for all the ills that flesh and soul are heirs to, has entered his parish, and the itching ears of his people, though con-

vinced of the worthlessness of his views, must be gratified by hearing for themselves the oracles of folly which they expect he will deliver. There is a morbid appetite for something new, strange, wonderful, which promises knowledge to stupidity, and virtue to indolence ; and eases the conscience of its burdens by showing how much the conduct and character of others is to be reprobated and shunned, thus alluring their attention from their own vicious habits, and sinful actions, and I need not say that it, oftentimes, overcomes reason and judgment, and will be gratified at the expense of a sacrifice of a sense of duty. The variation of a few degrees in the height of the thermometer, or course of the wind, should not detain any, and will not detain a devoted people from public worship. Nor should a transient teacher, who comes into the place only because he has nowhere else to go, and is permanent nowhere, only because a shallow fountain is soon exhausted, allure a people from the teachings of his voice, whom they have chosen and tried. I do not say to a people, never hear any one but your own minister. I say to all, explore all fountains. But little time, however, is required to fathom some ; and it is not well to sit, especially by a small stream, waiting till it has all run by. Opportunities can be taken when there are no religious exercises at their own place of worship, for a people to go abroad. And sufficient opportunities of this kind are furnished

to enable one to satisfy a most marvellous appetite for these wonderful, and alluring, yet insipid banquets. Let a people endeavor in some mode to gratify this craving without deserting their own house of worship. Do not for conscience' sake, as well as propriety's sake, let a people employ a man to labor during the week that they may be enlightened and edified, and go away when the day of teaching comes, to listen to the instructions of one who himself needs to be taught what be the first elements, both of a sound theology, correct morals, and Christian courtesy. Let a minister see his people making efforts to be constant at his ministrations, and, while there, attentive to his teachings, not sleeping over them, and he will feel a new vigor in his intellect, a new courage in his heart — there will be buoyancy instead of despondency — hopefulness instead of despair. I have no reason to complain in this respect. You have learned, I trust, that there is no way to be benefited by the services of this house, except by punctual attendance, and wakeful attention. Adhere to this principle, and the exercises of this place will not be in vain. Adhere to this principle, and the toil of our fathers in erecting here a Tabernacle to the Most High God will not be unavailing — it will prove to you the house of God and the gate of Heaven.

These are some of the trials of the ministry, and the evils which assail our religious institutions. They are

no greater than have existed before. There is no occasion to fear, much less to despair. Great reverence arising from superstition is not so valuable as a little arising from intelligence. Better that a minister should be less honored for his office, and more for his personal worth. The active mind is better fitted for the reception of truth than the indolent one. Religion has nothing to fear more than imbecility. There is a quiet which is of the grave. There is a peace which is death. When the mind is active, when the heart is warm, then is the time for true religion to prosper. Grant that tares will come up with the wheat,—better so than no harvest. The very evils of the present age are indicative of a better state of things. The shadows all fall westward. They are prophetic of day. We have no occasion to tremble for truth; never was there a time when her success was more sure. Men are inquiring, they are clamorous for something better,—and they will find it. Dogmatism has lost its power. A reason is asked for the faith that is in us—and a good and substantial reason can be given. And more than all, it will be understood. There is nothing seriously harmful to be feared from the crude ideas which possess the half-waking mind. Men will at first see the truth imperfectly. But while they are seeking it, though ever so erroneously, there is more hope for the Christian, more encouragement for the church than when men are

indifferent — indifferent alike to truth and error. Do not understand me, then, as complaining of these evils. They are a better sort of evils than ever before appeared. They are results of the mind awaking to a sense of its duty, dignity, destiny. It will, in its distorted movements, do some harm — but it will be the harm of inexperience, not of malicious purpose. There is cause for rejoicing in those indications that human forms are not destitute of human intelligence. Even the reason which is offered by many for neglecting religious institutions altogether, shows that there is something to hope from that evil. Such say that they ask a higher means than the present forms of worship furnish. “ You are too cold, too inactive ; we cannot be benefited. Introduce more of practical life into your discourses — deal less in dogmas — then we will flock to your church.” Thus they speak to us — and it is well — we do need more activity. The church needs a new spirit breathed into it, and it will be breathed into it. Everything around us indicates a higher activity — the very evils which exist are prophetic of it. Then let us bless God and take courage. Go forth and labor for truth. Impart knowledge where there is ignorance, teach wisdom where there is folly, infuse confidence where there is doubt, take the blind by the hand and lead them up from the gloom of darkness to the sweet light of day. Then the church will arise in brightness,

and beauty, and energy, and be clothed with righteousness, as with a garment.

My hearers, the century is closing. The shadow of yonder mountain is lengthening—soon will go down the last sun of an hundred years, since the altar of God was here erected by our ancestors. Hold their memories—hold their institutions dear to your hearts. Let us cleave, with undying love, to our sacred inheritance. Let it be our living purpose to be—let it be our dying consolation to have been faithful to the heritage left us by the honored dead. Those stout hearts, and strong hands which have toiled, and denied themselves of worldly comforts to rear a house to the honor of the Most High, have gone—Rogers, Gardner, Conant are among the departed—yonder place of burial contains their ashes. How many of their parishioners now lie with them,—a congregation of the dead, not of the living. Those venerable men who laid the foundation of our religious institutions are no more. Be ye their worthy descendants. Let not the blessings which you possess cause you to forget those who know not God, and who are destitute of the blessings of the Gospel of Peace. Sleep not in your well-dressed vineyard. Do for others what your fathers have done for you. Feel not that you have only to repose, not to work; that you have entered into your fathers' rest, and not into their labors. Honor

their memories by imitating the virtues of their lives, by cherishing the institutions which they founded, by frequenting the altar which they reared. Here may not the courts of the Lord be deserted. Here let not the spirits of our fathers, if spirits return to the earth,—and who can say but they hover over us?—find the altar of religion laid waste, and silence and desolation brooding over the vineyard which they planted in this wilderness. Here let the flame of religion, fanned by a charity that thinketh no evil, and a devotion which breathes the atmosphere of Heaven, glow with a bright, a pure, a constant, an inviting light. Here let the weary find rest—the doubting, confidence—the sorrowful, comfort—the bereaved, consolation—the aged, support—the young, wisdom. Here let the weak in the faith be received, but not to disputations about doubtful questions. Here let the disciple of free, honest mind, and devout heart, of whatever Christian name, partake of the symbols of a Saviour's living sacrifice, and dying love. Here may the trembling, distrustful heart ever find a cordial, a cheering welcome. Let not the iron of any one's opinion be thrust into the heart of another. Let this pulpit ever be free,—the oracle of thorough, honest, reverential study. Forbid nothing but impiety, ignorance and uncharitableness to enter it. Let families gather here and bow down unitedly before this altar, worshiping God long after

we are united with the host who have crossed the flood. Not one of us will behold the light of another centennial of our church. We shall lie, a congregation of the dead, under the shadow of yonder pine trees. My lips, and heart will long since have mouldered into dust — you will long since have joined the innumerable company in their last resting place. Let not our unfaithfulness send a pang, in that day, through the soul. So live, as to transmit the heritage which we have received uncorrupted, to coming generations — that when they sit in solemn judgment upon our deeds, as we now sit upon the deeds of our predecessors, they will rebuild our sepulchres and reëngrave our epitaphs, — pointing the stranger, with tears of joy, of pride, and gratitude to God, to our graves, as they exclaim — These, these were our ancestors. So live that the blessing of our God and our fathers' God may rest upon us and upon those who come after us, our children and our childrens' children, to the remotest generation.



A P P E N D I X.

(A)

THE places of settlement of the first inhabitants, though not directly connected with my subject, may interest the reader. Thomas Wilder settled on the farm now occupied by Mr. Peter Wilder. Nathaniel Carter on that of Mr. Nathaniel Carter. Benjamin Whitcomb on that of Mr. Abel Phelps. Jonathan Wilson on that of Mr. Amos Haws. He built the first mill in town, where now stands Jonas Kendall and Sons' paper mill. Jonathan Carter on the farm of Mr. Sylvester Pierce. Thomas Houghton on that of Mr. Josiah Derby. Joseph Wheelock on that of Mr. J. Milton Burrage. Oliver Carter on the farms of Mr. Wilder Carter and Mr. Salmon Richardson. Josiah Carter on that of Mr. Solon Carter. Gardner Wilder on that of Mr. Shepherd C. Wilder. William Divoll on that of Deacon William Burrage. William Sawyer on that of Mr. Joseph Smith. Ebenezer Polly on that of widow Edward Low. Oliver Houghton on that of Mr. Jacob Brown. [Rev. Mr. Conant's sermon on leaving the old meeting-house, Oct. 12, 1823, p. 5, with some changes and additions.]

It appears to me very remarkable that but one family should have lived in town for seven years. Mr. Conant gives no authority for the statement. He probably obtained it from old people then living. I have been unable, after much inquiry, to verify it. Gershom Houghton's farm of one hundred and sixty-two acres was not surveyed till October 17, 1729. His father Robert Houghton's land was surveyed, May 22, 1722. His son might have built a house on his father's land four years before his portion was set off. [Proprietor's books in the hands of Mr. Moses Sawyer, Sterling.]

The town meetings were held at the house of Mr. Benjamin Whitcomb, till the meeting-house was as far finished as to accommodate the inhabitants, except the first meeting, which was held at Mr. Jonathan White's. The officers chosen at the first town meeting were as follow.

Mr. Joseph Wheelock, *Moderator.*

Thomas Houghton, *Town Clerk,*

Thomas Houghton, Ebenezer Polly, Jonathan Wilson, *Assessors.*

Nathaniel Carter, Thomas Wilder, *Selectmen.*

Gershom Houghton, *Town Treasurer.*

William Divoll, *Constable.*

Gardner Wilder, Jonathan Carter, *Fence Viewers.*

Jonathan White, *Sealer of Weights and Measures.*
 Benjamin Whitcomb, *Collector and Sealer of Leather.*
 Joseph Wheclock, Nathaniel Carter, *Surveyor of Highways.*
 Benjamin Whitecomb, Gardner Wilder, *Hog Reeves.*
 Thomas Davenport, *Surveyor of Clayboards and Shingles.*
 Ebenezer Polly, Thomas Houghton, *Deer Reeves.*

I have obtained from some of the aged people in town the names and residences of some other of the early settlers. The present inhabitants of the town may be interested in knowing them. I am principally indebted for this information to Mr. Jonas Kendall, and Deacon David Wilder.

Asa Johnson, where now resides Mr. Sewell Tyler. Nathan Johnson, where the late John Divoll. — Ames, where now Mr. Josiah Burrage. His wife was called a witch. Noah Beaman, on the farm of Mr. Horace Rice. He occasionally *led* the singing in church, and almost invariably fell *behind* the rest one note. Nathaniel Rogers, brother of the minister, where lived the late widow Catherine Wilder. Abijah Smith, married Lydia, sister of Rev. Mr. Rogers, on that of Mr. Joseph Smith. Rev. Josiah Swan, where now Mr. George Patch, was for many years a schoolmaster, died July, 1780. Doctor Jacob Peabody, who married Mr. Rogers's oldest sister, Susannah, on the farm of Captain E. Balch. Ebenezer Houghton on that of Mr. David Houghton. Nathaniel Colburn, on that of Mr. Joseph Colburn. Oliver Hoar, on that of the Alms-house. James Symonds, on that of Mr. Jonas Merriam. Jonas Kendall on that of Gen. Eastabrooks. Timothy Kendall, on that of Mr. Thomas Reed. Elisha White, on that of Mr. Samuel Abbot. Deacon Israel Nichols, on that of Mr. Benjamin Pierce. Josiah White, on that of Mr. William Tollman. F. Stearns, near where Mr. John Perkins lives, was a blacksmith. Samuel Hale, on the farm of Mr. Charles Hale, a very daring, enterprising man — and, withal, something of a wrestler. Thomas Davenport, for many years town clerk, near Mr. Luke Joslin's.

The fortified houses were Oliver Carter's, — one twenty rods west of the house of Mr. William Tollman in the field, and one near Mr. Oliver Whitney's, in Lunenburg, which accommodated the east part of the town. "Gershom Houghton," the first settler, "died, April 3, 1757." [Stephen Buss's Journal, see note D].

Mr. Rogers alleges, that there were sixty families in town in 1749, in his action against the town for the recovery of a part of his salary which had been unpaid. [Record of Court, Worcester.]



(B)

In the act incorporating the town, Chualoom Pond is called Wuckachawaluck Pond — and in the proprietors' books it is called Unckachewalunk Pond. Massapog Pond is called in the act of incorporation Massapoge, and in the proprietors' books Massapauge.

There were not more than three or four cleared fields in the middle of the town at this time. No attack was ever made upon the inhabitants of the town by the Indians, although there were frequent alarms.

(C)

The tradition is, that John Beaman, son of Noah Beaman, and Anna Symons, daughter of James Symons, were the first male and female children baptized in town.

(D)

The minister lot was the ninth lot. The proprietors, in March 11, 1744-5, chose a committee to give Rev. John Rogers a deed of the minister lot. In October 12, 1742, they vote to give land for a convenient burying place on the east of Leominster meeting-house. [Proprietor's books.]

I find it difficult to settle the value of money at this time. The statement in the discourse cannot be far from correct.

Mr. Rogers's texts, during his four Sundays, were as follow : First Sunday, 2d Corinthians, ii. 16. Second Sunday, Romans, vii. 28. Matthew, xxv. 46. Third Sunday, Matthew, xiv. 15. John, iii. 18. Fourth Sunday, Luke, xviii. 14. Hebrews, iii. 7, 8. [Manuscript Journal of Stephen Buss, in the hands of his son Deacon John Buss. I am indebted to this important document for many particulars in the appendix, respecting preachers and sermons.]

(E)

A Christian church was incorporated on the fourteenth [old style, twenty-sixth new style] day of September, A. D. 1743, and the first sixteen members in the following catalogue subscribed this

Covenant.

Being persuaded that we are now called of God to come into the state of a Gospel Church, we do it, therefore, freely in a solemn and religious manner, reflecting on our own unworthiness, admiring the mercy and condescension of God, and trusting in his promised grace. Accordingly—in the presence of God and men we make these solemn declarations respecting our faith and practice.

Declaring our hearty belief of the Christian religion comprised in the Holy Scriptures, we firmly resolve, that (studying and meditating in the Word of God, both day and night,) we will thereunto habitually conform our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to the Lord Jehovah, (to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,) and take Him for our eternal portion.

We give up ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, as our Prophet, Priest and King.

We promise constantly, and in an exemplary manner, to observe all the duties of the Moral Law, to live soberly, righteously, and piously, keeping consciences void of offence toward God and men.

We resolve to walk together as becomes a church of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the faith and order of the Gospel, according to the best light we can obtain, diligently attending the public worship of God, the sacraments of the New Testament, and all his sacred institutions ; watching over one another in meekness and tenderness.

We promise likewise, if any children shall be committed to our care, to educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We promise to be sincerely and regularly concerned for our neighbors' welfare, both temporal and spiritual ; to do no injury ; to give no offence ; but to do what in us lies to promote the happiness of all, (with whom we shall be concerned) in every respect — and not to confine this caution and benevolence to our friends, but to extend them even to our enemies.

More particularly, we promise inviolably to practise all relative duties, both to superiors, inferiors and equals ; to show them all that honor, love, condescension and beneficence, which shall be due from us.

We promise never to revenge any injury which we may suppose ourselves to have received of our neighbors.

We will never promote or countenance any obscenity or impurity by word or deed.

We will never wrong our neighbor's worldly estate, but endeavor to advance it, conscientiously observing the rules of justness and honesty ; and as far as we shall be able, make full reparation of any injuries which we may have done.

Moreover, we solemnly promise, that we will never allow ourselves in the practice of calumny or slander ; but will strictly regard such Christian rules as these. (Titus iii. 2.) Speak evil of no man. (James iv. 11.) Speak not evil one of another ; (2 Cor. xii. 20.) lest there be strifes, backbitings, whisperings ; — and will exercise that charity which covereth the multitude of faults and thinketh no evil.

And in all our affairs whatsoever, we will religiously avoid (as well as prudently discourage,) indiscreet anger, contention, and a selfish and party spirit.

And, in sum, we solemnly engage that we will invariably seek the public weal, and govern ourselves by the peaceful, charitable, and generous principles of our holy religion, fixedly adhering to that most reasonable precept of our Blessed Lord and Pattern, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even the same unto them.”

And now sensible of our own corruption and weakness, and of the power and vigilance of our spiritual enemies, we implore and trust in the grace of

God, through Jesus Christ, to preserve us from dissimulation and instability, with reference to these our sacred vows and resolutions; to which, in the presence and fear of our righteous all-seeing Judge, we subscribe our names.

John Rogers,	Ebenezer Polly,	James Boutell,	Thomas Houghton,
Benj. Whitcomb,	Thomas Wilder,	Joseph Wheelock,	Nathaniel Carter,
Jonathan White,	Ephraim Stone,	David Johnson,	Simon Butler,
Oliver Carter,	Thomas White,	Phillips Sweetser,	Gardner Wilder.

The same day John Rogers was ordained pastor of this church; and the Presbytery, convened for the purpose, were Rev. John Prentice of Lancaster, Rev. Thomas Parker of Dracut, Rev. Willard Hall of Westford, Rev. Daniel Rogers of Littleton, Rev. David Stearns of Lunenburg, and Rev. Elisha Marsh of Narragansett, No. 2, (now Westminster.)

(F)

Result of the Ecclesiastical Council held at Leominster, July 26th, 1757, to consider the case of Rev. John Rogers.

A council of fifteen churches, viz.: the second church in Sudbury, the third church in Ipswich, the second church in Beverly, the first church in Danvers, the new brick church in Boston, the first church in Westborough, the first church in Medway, the first church in Rutland District, the first church in Stoughton, the church in Southborough, the church in Lunenburg, the church in Marlborough, the church in Chelmsford, and the first church in Lancaster, by their pastors and delegates, and the church in Groton by their delegates, met at Leominster, July 26, 1757. At the request of a number of persons, members of the church in Leominster, professing themselves dissatisfied with their pastor, the Rev. Mr. John Rogers, by them apprehended unsound respecting some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, with desire that the said council would hear and give advice to the said dissatisfied members under their difficulties, who having solemnly invoked the Great and Only Wise God for direction, and having fully understood by papers laid before us, and by several testimonies, that the dissatisfied brethren had used all proper endeavors with their pastor, to obtain a mutual council, before which the pastor and aggrieved might with freedom lay those causes, but had finally been denied, by which we were satisfied that they had just right separately to make application for a council, and having to our grief been certified by a committee which we sent to Rev. Mr. Rogers, that he would neither concur with his aggrieved brethren in laying before us what was difficult among them, nor join with them in calling a mutual council, we found ourselves obliged to proceed to an hearing of what the dissatisfied had to exhibit, and after we had gained what light we could in the matter of said difficulty, as well from the brethren of the church that

adhered to their pastor, (so far as we could converse with them) as from the dissatisfied brethren themselves, we came at last to the following result. viz. : Respecting the first article, which in your letter missive they set before us, viz. : that fundamental doctrine of Christianity of the true Divinity or Godhead of Jesus Christ, we unanimously judge, that the aggrieved brethren had just reason to be dissatisfied with him concerning it, and it appeared to the majority of this council, that the aggrieved brethren had just ground of suspicion, that the Rev. Mr. Rogers did not hold or believe the essential Divinity of Christ as it is revealed in the Divine Word.

As to the article respecting original sin, from what hath been delivered unto us by the brethren from Mr. Rogers's late printed sermon, from his full approbation and recommendation of a late pamphlet entitled "The Winter Evening Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin," and from many coincident testimonies, it appears to this council that he denies the doctrine of original sin, both the imputation of the guilt and the corruption of our nature, and that the aggrieved brethren have grounds of dissatisfaction with him upon this also.

With regard to the doctrine of regeneration, it is evident to this council, from his sermon aforesaid, and from other concurring testimonies, that the Rev. Mr. Rogers hath vented and propagated an unsound and unscriptural notion of it, and as to the doctrine of conversion, as Mr. Rogers distinguisheth it from regeneration, he evidently appears confused and unintelligible, so that in these likewise, he hath given further ground of dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, we think we have just grounds and occasion to add, the council hath abundant evidence that Mr. Rogers hath cast most indecent and unchristian reflections, on the shorter catechism of the venerable Assembly of Divines, at Westminster, and as it is our incumbent duty, we would bear our public united testimony against his reflections, at the same time, we do declare hereby our full approbation of it as an excellent composure, orthodox, and agreeable to the Word of God, and that we recommend the due use of it to all Christians.

And now although we may well be supposed to think, (as we do) that the aggrieved brethren of the church of Leominster, who have called us in for their help, had just reason to be dissatisfied with their pastor, the Rev. Mr. Rogers, on the account of his doctrines, against which we have taken exceptions as aforesaid, yet unwilling to be the abettors of hasty and groundless separations, and willing to hope the Rev. Mr. Rogers, upon serious consideration, with the help of a divine illumination, may so far change his apprehension of the doctrines of religion, as for the future to recommend his public preaching more to the edification of his flock than in time past, feeding them with knowledge and understanding, we advise the said aggrieved at the present, and for the space of three months at least, to attend upon their said pastor's ministry, and to hear him with candor, waiting upon the God that hath the hearts of all men in his hands, to give them relief in such way and manner as shall seem best to him; but if upon so long attending and waiting, they find no alteration in

your pastor handling the important doctrines of religion, but that he still goeth on propagating his errors, or give no satisfactory evidence of his change of principle, we advise that you renew your application to the council by the moderator, or if he be in providence prevented, then the next eldest minister or the eldest scribe, for further advice.

Upon the whole, dear brethren, at whose request we have convened this council, while we approve of your real attachments to the doctrines of the gospel, and concern to keep the truth once delivered to the saints unadulterated, we would earnestly exhort you to preserve the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, with undissembled charity, be humbled before God, that he should permit such errors to be diffused among you, as darken the glory of the gospel, and have the greatest tendency to subvert the souls of men — praying earnestly for yourselves and for one another, in this day of temptation and danger ; that you may with unshaken fortitude adhere to the form of sound words delivered in the unerring oracles of truth, professed by our fathers who peopled this wilderness, and maintained in the harmonious confession of the protestant allies, who shook off the yoke of antichrist ; at the same time we exhort you with equal earnestness, to behave with the most Christian and charitable disposition towards your other brethren, and to use every prudent method to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, that if possible, you may with one heart, join your endeavors to promote the kingdom of Christ. Pray for your reverend pastor, that he may have much of the presence of the Divine Redeemer with him, to guide and influence him in his present circumstances, and that the difficulties he meets with, may be the happy means of purifying his faith, brightening his graces, and preparing him for further usefulness.

And we hope it will not be offensive to the Rev. Mr. Rogers, if we take the liberty to assure him that it is with the uttermost regret that we have been obliged to make these remarks upon the doctrines he hath delivered from the pulpit and from the press ; we beg leave to assure him that nothing but a full conviction that they are contrary to the gospel of Christ and subversive of the way of salvation laid down in the inspired oracles, could have persuaded us to have taken those steps, and we would earnestly beseech him with a meek and teachable temper, to compare the doctrines which have been received by the churches in this land and other churches of the Reformation, with the Sacred Scriptures, and to accompany his inquiry with ardent prayer to the Father of lights, that he may be guided into all truth. We desire to unite our prayers in his behalf, that the spirit of Christ may be found upon him, enlighten him in the whole council of God, and make him a distinguished instrument of advancing the kingdom of Christ ; and we seriously advise the brethren who adhere to their pastor, to be earnest in their prayers to God that they may be preserved from error in this day of temptation, and not to suffer their minds to be leavened with prejudice against their brethren who have been, and are dissatisfied with several doctrines delivered by Mr. Rogers ; but on the contrary to unite with them in your assiduous endeavors to promote the cause of truth, righteousness, and peace, that the

religion of Jesus may prevail in its purity and power among them, and may be safely transmitted to distant posterity. Signed by

Delegates.

James Hulsey,	Samuel Flint,
Josiah Brown,	Joseph Cresey,
Edward Hartwell,	Benjamin Foster,
William Ward,	Edward Baker,
Thomas Greenough,	James Stone,
John Ruddock,	Joseph Farwell,
Daniel Proctor,	Joseph Hartwell,
Samuel Dakin,	Joshua Osgood,
John Parker,	Thomas Cummings,
Joshua Partridge,	Joshua Fairbank,
Josiah White,	Nathaniel Whitney,
Andrew Rice,	Joseph Boynton,
Cornelius Tarbell,	Timothy Brigham.

Pastors.

Israel Loring, [Sudbury.]	Thomas Frink. [?]
Samuel Wigglesworth.	Samuel Dunbar, [Stoughton.]
John Chipman, [Beverly.]	Nathan Stone, [Southboro'.]
Peter Clark, [Danvers.]	David Stearns, [Lunenburg.]
Ebenezer Pemberton, [Boston.]	Aaron Smith, [Marlborough.]
Ebenezer Parkman, [Westborough.]	Ebenezer Bridge, [Chelmsford.]
Nathan Buckman, [Medway.]	Timothy Harrington, [Lancaster.]

Dr. Bancroft, in his Half Century Sermon, (p. 11) states that Rev. Mr. Mellen of Sterling, was on this council. It will be perceived that the doings of the council do not sustain this statement. Thinking it possible that he might have been a member of some one of the councils, which met to advise the church upon Mr. Rogers's case, I wrote to Rev. Mr. Fosdick, pastor of the congregational church in Sterling, to learn if there were any records of the church to sustain the supposition. The following is the reply:

BROTHER STEBBINS,

According to your desire, I have examined our church records, and find *no* mention of Mr. Mellen's presence in Leominster council, between July, 1757, and January, 1758, or in the neighborhood of these dates. Invitations to councils are frequently recorded, as usual, in the records of churches.

Your friend and servant,

DAVID FOSDICK, JR.

Sterling, September 21st, 1843.

The opinion that Mr. Mellen was a member of the council, probably arose from the opposition of Mr. Mellen to the open and decided course pursued by his brother-in-law, Mr. Rogers, and his declaring, perhaps, that the

council acted correctly. That Mr. Mellen entertained substantially the same opinions as Mr. Rogers, is past all question. It is stated by Dr. Bancroft, that when Mr. Mellen was asked by one of his parishioners, "how he could denounce Mr. Rogers as a heretic, and exhort him to retract his doctrinal tenets, and in case of refusal, to advise the people of his charge to expel him from his pastoral office," ? replied ; "Why, dear madam, Mr. Rogers is an indiscreet man, and is at least fifty years too early in preaching such doctrines from the pulpit." Those of the present generation will judge which of the two was the true preacher of the whole counsel of God.

Mr. Harrington of Lancaster, was on the council, and signed his name to a paper, declaring doctrines to be "subversive of the gospel," which he himself believed. There is no excuse—no palliation. The historian of Lancaster, (Joseph Willard, Esq., Worcester Magazine, September, 1826, p. 324,) is compelled to admit Mr. Harrington's conduct, in respect to his opinions, "was not decided and manly. Although fully an Arminian, he displeased many at the time, by the temporizing course he adopted." How weak and puny worldly wisdom seems, after a century. Who would not rather be honest, manly, frank John Rogers, even though he might not have had all needful prudence, than temporizing, undecided, unmanly Timothy Harrington ? Who would not rather have it said of him that he was persecuted for righteousness' sake, than that he sold his birthright for the pottage of his salary. History must be inexorable. The voice of our deeds will be heard beyond our graves. Posterity will sit in judgment upon the past. Let religious teachers take heed how they seek the approbation of the present generation, at the expense of that alone which can bring them honor on the historian's page, or in another generation's memory. He who attempts to screen himself from the charge of heresy, by pouring out the vials of wrath upon another no more guilty than himself, (unless it be a crime to be true to conviction and conscience) must not escape the penalty which history has in store for the unfaithful, the vacillating, and hypocritical.



(G)

The Sunday after Mr. Rogers was suspended from his pastoral office for two months, "November 27, 1787, Rev. Samuel Dunbar of Stoughton, preached from John ix. 34. Mr. Rogers came to the meeting-house, but when he was denied the liberty of the pulpit he preached at his own house the same day that Mr. Dunbar preached at the meeting-house. The next Sabbath Mr. Rogers came to the meeting-house, but the meeting-house being locked he preached at his own house, and no preaching at the meeting-house. December 11th, Mr. Rogers came to the meeting-house but was denied going into the pulpit. The same day Mr. Harrington of Lancaster, preached from Romans x. 3." [Stephen Buss's Journal, referred to above, note D.]

(G)

Remonstrance of the friends of Mr. Rogers, read in town-meeting, January 28th, 1758. [Town Records, vol. 1, p. 45.] History will not be responsible for the authenticity or genuineness of Mr. Rogers's letter.

To those inhabitants of said Leominster who have lately pretended to be dissatisfied with the Rev. Mr. John Rogers, — Sirs :

As the article respecting the dismission of the said Rev. Mr. Rogers from his pastoral office, and those articles which refer to your procuring any other preacher either past or future, and also those which relate to the granting or raising any moneys to defray the charges that have arisen or may arise on any such account contained in the warrant for calling a meeting of the town this day, as all these do indeed appear to the subscribers to be very unreasonable, inequitable and unjust, so they do by these presents utterly protest against your proceeding to pass any vote as a town on any of the forementioned articles —

Phillips Sweatsir,	Thomas Wilder,	Joseph Wheelock,
Oliver Wyman,	Benjamin Whitcomb,	Simon Butler,
John Wheelock,	Elizabeth Wheelock,	Stephen Johnson,
Jacob Peabody,	Ebenezer Colburn,	Nathaniel Colburn,
William Warner,	Timothy Kendall,	Jonathan Colburn,
Nathaniel Carter,	Nathaniel Rogers,	Jacob Peabody, Jr.,
Thomas Leggett,	Nathaniel Colburn, Jr.,	Abner Wheelock,
Jonathan White,	Jonas Kendall,	Ebenezer Polley,
John Joslin, Jr.,	Joshua Wood,	John Walker,
Joseph Polley,	Jonathan Wheelock,	John Joslin,
James Symond,	Ezra Hall,	Abel Wheelock,
Peter Houghton,	Wid. Joanna Houghton,	Nathaniel Carter, Jr.,
Phillips Sweatsir, Jr.,		Recorded by

JONATHAN WILSON, Town Clerk.

(H)

It does not seem necessary to enter at length all the documents on record in the clerk's office respecting this case. I shall only introduce the rule of court alluded to, which may be considered as the settlement of the matter in dispute, and the names of the petitioners for a separate precinct.

Rule of Supreme Court, September Term, 1761, Worcester, Mass.

Each party shall bear his own cost, and the said John Rogers in court fully released to the said town of Leominster, the judgment reviewed and the bond of review and all demands on them as their minister ; and the said inhabitants agree that those who adhere to the said Rogers, as far as lies in

said town be incorporated into a separate precinct, and that those who shall on or before the last day of October next, send their names to the clerk's office and desire to be incorporated into a separate precinct shall, they and their estates, be the precinct, and that the other inhabitants shall on request, by vote, join in the said petition that they may be so incorporated, and also agree that if the adherents of the said Rogers shall be so incorporated, the precinct that remains shall, within one year after they are so incorporated, pay to the said new made precinct the sum of £45 lawful money; and the farther sum of £45 lawful money more within ten years after they are so incorporated, with the interest thereof, after the expiration of the first year.

Copy as of record examined.

SAMUEL WINTHROP, Clerk.

I find the following entry in the Journal referred to at the close of this note. "December the 3d, 1749. A society of people meeting at the house of Amos Rugg on Sabbath days which have agreed with Mr. Josiah Brown to preach." There are entries of sermons till Feb. 11th, 1750. This Mr. Rugg lived in what is called North Row, in Sterling. The people in the south part of the town were accommodated by this meeting. This Joseph Brown preached, after Mr. Rogers was dismissed, to the town. See note (I).

PETITION.—To the Honorable Justices of the Superior Court, &c., Sept. 18th, 1761.

We, the subscribers, inhabitants of Leominster and adherents of Rev. Mr. Rogers, our present pastor, agreeable to the late rule of court entered into by the said town, do by this writing declare our consent and desire to be incorporated into a separate precinct so long as we support the gospel ministry among ourselves.

Filed in the office of the Clerk of Sept. Court, Oct. 31st, 1761.

NATHANIEL HATCH, Clerk.

Nathaniel Colburn,	James Symonds,	Joseph Polley,
Joseph Wheelock,	Nathaniel Carter,	Simon Butler,
Nathaniel Rogers,	David Farnsworth,	Thomas Leggett,
Thomas Wilder, Jr.,	William Warner,	John Colburn,
Nathaniel Carter, Jr.,	Susanna Peabody,	Jonathan White,
Abner Wheelock,	Jonathan Colburn,	Timothy Kendall,
Jonas Kendall,	Magaban Leggett,	Jonathan White, Jr.,
Thomas Davenport,	Abel Wheelock,	Samuel Hardcastle.

Stephen Symonds of Boxford, having a farm in Leominster, desires it may be annexed to the above mentioned precinct.

I am informed, by Hon. Jonas Kendall, that some of these petitioners did not actually intend to go so far as to form a new poll parish. Though friends of Mr. Rogers, they did not think such a step justifiable. There must have been some mistake in their signing this petition. They did not attend Mr. Rogers's meeting.

(I)

Mr. Samuel Foxcroft graduated at Cambridge, 1754. He was ordained at New Gloucester, January 16th, 1765, was dismissed just at the peace, for Cumberland, and died March 2d, 1807, aged 72. [Manuscript Catalogue of Harvard College, in the library of the Mass. His. Society.]

I find the following particulars respecting the preachers of this period entered in the journal of Stephen Buss. For six Sundays after Mr. Rogers was suspended from his pulpit, it was supplied by Mr. Stone of Southboro', Mr. Stearns of Lunenburg, Mr. Bliss of Concord, Mr. Martin of Westboro', Mr. Dunbar of Stoughton and Mr. Harrington of Lancaster. On some of the Sundays between the suspension and dismissal, there was no preaching. Judging from the texts of some of these sermons, they were highly doctrinal in opposition to Mr. Rogers.

The day after Mr. Rogers was dismissed from his pastoral office, Jan. 28th, Rev. Mr. Stone of Southboro' preached. He was formerly minister of Stoneham. For a year and a half, from Feb. 19th, 1758, to Sept. 1759, with the exception of a few Sundays when Mr. John Carnes and Mr. Josiah Swan preached, the pulpit was supplied by Mr. Josiah Brown. He is the same man, probably, who preached ten years before at Mr. Amos Rugg's. See note (H).

June 28th, 1728. A fast in Leominster, four ministers to assist. Rev. Mr. Martin of Westboro', Rev. Mr. Smith of Marlboro', Rev. Mr. Goss of Bolton, Rev. Mr. Harrington of Lancaster. Mr. Smith preached in the forenoon, text, Romans x. 10. Mr. Martin preached in the afternoon, text, 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. In the fall of 1759, Mr. Turfts [Tufts Joshua (?) Cambridge College, 1736] preached six Sundays. Mr. Rogers is mentioned as being "to the meeting-house" on one of these Sundays.

November 11th, 1759, Mr. Foxcroft, forenoon, Matthew i. 21. Afternoon, Proverbs xi. 19. This is the first Sunday Mr. Foxcroft preached, and he continued to preach at intervals till his call to settle. February 3d, 1760, Mr. Fairfield [John, Cambridge College, 1757, (?)] preached, and he preached for two or three months a considerable part of the time. During intervals in Mr. Fairfield's preaching, Mr. Sparhawk [Ebenezer, Cambridge College, 1756, (?)] preached a number of Sundays. Some Sundays are noted as having "no preaching." "March 20th, 1760. A fast in order to call a minister. Four ministers to assist: Two Mr. Emersons, Mr. Hemenway [of Townsend], Mr. Davis of Holden. Forenoon, Mr. Daniel Emerson prayer, Rev. Mr. Joseph Emerson preached, Matthew ix. 28. Afternoon, Rev. Mr. Hemenway prayer, Rev. Mr. Davis preached, 2 Cor. vi. 34." "April 13th, took up contribution for Boston," on account of "great fire." Under date "July 27th, 1760," is the following entry: Mr. Francis Gardner, son of Rev. Mr. Gardner of Stow, forenoon Luke xix. 22. Afternoon Luke xiii. 6." This was the first Sunday of Mr. Gardner's preaching in Leominster. There is no mention of his preaching again till February 7th, 1762, a year and a half

after. "November 18th, 1760, Mr. Fezenton [Fessenden Thomas, Cambridge College, 1758, (?)] preached." He preached but a few Sundays. After him came a Mr. Shaddock, preached seven Sundays. "May 10th, 1761, Mr. Livermore [Jonathan, Cambridge College, 1760, (?)] preached;" and from this time to February 7th, 1762, Messrs Foxcroft, Livermore and Fezenton supplied the pulpit. At this last date Mr. Gardner appears again in the pulpit. Mr. Livermore and Mr. Gardner continue to preach till May 2d, 1762, when I find the following entry : "Mr. Foxcroft forenoon, Deuteronomy xxxii. 29. Afternoon, Psalm lxii., 11. his farewell sermon. Mr. Gardner seems to have preached without a rival, unless Mr Stenson be one, who preached two Sundays, till August 22d, 1762, when perilous times came for him also, after having cleared the field of his hosts of opponents. The following is the entry in the journal at that date. — "Mr. Emerson of Reding, on probation, text, forenoon, Hebrews iv. 16. Afternoon, Hebrews x. 30." Mr. Emerson preached four Sundays, when the church met to decide between the candidates. The entry in the journal is thus : "September 20th, a church meeting to make choice of a minister. Mr. Gardner and Mr. Emerson upon probation. Mr. Gardner three the most votes." Mr. Emerson continued to preach till the Sunday after the parish called Mr. Gardner, and this Sunday is called his "last day." "Forenoon, Luke xv. 10. Afternoon, 2 Timothy i. 10." "October 17th, 1762, Mr. Gardner, the first day after his call, Isaiah lxv. 20, last part." Mr. Gardner preached most of the time till his ordination, Dec. 22d, 1762 "December 26th, 1762, Mr. Foxcroft" (who it seems had forgiven the tardy action of the town) "the next Sabbath after Mr. Gardner was ordained, forenoon, Hebrews ii. 3. Afternoon, Acts xvii. 31."



(J)

I am indebted to Rev. J. B. Felt, of Boston, for the census of the town in 1763. There were at that time 104 houses; 107 families, 186 males, under 16 years of age; 189 females, under 16; 173 males above 16; and 180 females above 16; there were five negroes; in all, 743.



(K)

The following is the discharge which Mr. Rogers gave his precinct.

Know all men by these presents, that whereas the inhabitants of the second precinct in Leominster have generously voted to give and grant to me John Rogers of Leominster, the sum of forty-five pounds, payable in manner following, to wit: fifteen pounds to be paid in one year, from the first day of March last, and fifteen pounds to be paid in two years from the first day of

March last, and fifteen pounds to be paid in three years from the first day of March last—in consideration thereof, I, the said John Rogers, do by these presents hereby remise, release, quit claim and forever discharge the said second precinct of and from all claims or demands, actions or causes of actions, either in law or equity, for any service done by me for or towards them as a precinct, and upon the payment of the said forty-five pounds in manner aforesaid, I hereby acknowledge the said precinct is fully, effectually and in the most ample manner exonerated and discharged from me of all demands of every kind that can be named or mentioned on any pretence whatsoever, the aforesaid sum being to my full satisfaction and contentment, as witness my hand and seal this twenty-fifth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven.

JOHN ROGERS.

Signed, sealed and delivered in presence of

NATHANIEL CARTER, JR.

ASA KENDALL.



(L)

I feel authorized to say that in good time a monument will be erected over the grave of Rogers, if it can be found, if not, it will probably stand on the spot which his pulpit covered, now enclosed within the burying ground.



(M)

The ancestry of Mr. Rogers cannot be traced through every individual, up to the martyr. I have spared no pains within my reach to obtain every name, but I have failed. The great grandfather of Mr. Rogers appears to have died from all record as well as from among men. I speak quite confidently, as Rev. Joseph B. Felt has failed to find it, in his searching investigations into the records of Salem and Ipswich. I have no doubt of Mr. Rogers's true heirship of the martyr's name. Tradition is strong, and other circumstances make the presumption almost fact. The father of Rev. John Rogers, was Rev. John Rogers, the second minister of Boxford. He was born at Salem, graduated at Harvard, 1705, ordained, 1709, dismissed, 1743, died at his son's, in this town, 1755. [Gage's His. of Rowley, p. 43.]

The father of Rev. John Rogers, of Boxford, was son of Jeremiah Rogers, of Salem. "Jeremiah Rogers, of Salem, had died lately, 1729-30; he left a widow. 1725, June 5, Rev. John Rogers desired Salem to assist his parents, and promised repayment of such aid if he should be able." [From the MSS. of Rev. J. B. Felt, which he kindly permitted me to examine, and make extracts from.]

Here I am at a stand. I cannot learn who was the father of Jeremiah Rogers. I suppose him to have been grandson of Rev Nathaniel Rogers, of Ipswich. This Nathaniel came over from England about 1636, and "was the second son of that famous man, Mr. John Rogers, of Dedham, born while his father was minister of Haverhill, about 1598." [Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol. 1, p. 374; Hartford, 1820.] This John Rogers, of Dedham, was son of one of the ten children of the martyr.

The children of Rev. Nathaniel Rogers, of Ipswich, were John, Nathaniel, Samuel, Timothy, Ezekiel, and a daughter. I did not take the daughter's name, as Jeremiah must have been descended from the male branch of the family.

JOHN, the oldest son of Nathaniel, had John, Daniel, and Nathaniel. Neither of these sons had a son named Jeremiah.

John, the oldest of the three, had John, Samuel, William, Nathaniel, Daniel, and Richard.

Daniel, the second son, had Daniel, formerly minister of Littleton, who made the prayer at the ordination of Rev. John Rogers, of Leominster.

Nathaniel, the third son, had Nathaniel.

NATHANIEL, the second son of Rev. Nathaniel, of Ipswich, had probably no children, as his will, made in 1676, gave his property to John, eldest son of his brother John.

SAMUEL, the third son of Rev. N. Rogers, of Ipswich, married Sarah Wade, of Ipswich, November 13, 1661; had several children, and died, December 21, 1693. I have been unable to learn the names of any of these children. It is possible one of them may have been Jeremiah.

TIMOTHY, the fourth son of the Rev. N. Rogers, of Ipswich, lived some time in Ipswich, but nothing is known of his family. It is possible that one of his children may have been Jeremiah.

EZEKIEL, the fifth son of Rev. N. Rogers, of Ipswich, had Nathaniel, Ezekiel, Timothy, Samuel. The grand-children I do not know.

If Jeremiah, the grandfather of Rev. J. Rogers, of Leominster, is a grandson of Rev. Nathaniel Rogers, of Ipswich, as I suppose, he must be a son of either Samuel or Timothy. If a great grandson, then he must have descended from one of these two, or Ezekiel, as all of John's grand-children in the male line are given above, and *Jeremiah is not*. The tradition preserved in two branches of Rev. John Rogers's, of Boxford, family makes John, of Leominster, the eighth from the martyr. Thus: John Rogers, of Boxford, (married to Susannah Marston, March 24, 1709,) had seven children. Susannah, (born June 28, 1711.) John, the minister of Leominster, (born September 24, 1712.) Benjamin, (born July 11, 1714.) Mehitable, (July 26, 1716, died August 13, the same year.) Nathaniel, who lived for a time in Leominster, (June 7, 1718.) Lydia, who married Abijah Smith, of Leominster, (August 3, 1720.) Eunice, (July 27, 1724.)

SUSANNAH, the oldest child, married Doctor Jacob Peabody, who lived in Leominster. Their son, Doctor Jacob Peabody, had a daughter Eunice; she married a Carter, and her son, Mr. Thomas Carter, of Lunenburg, in-

forms me that his great uncle, the son of Susannah, told him that he (Mr. Carter) was the eleventh from the martyr. Consequently his mother would have been tenth ; her father, Dr. Jacob Peabody, Jr., the ninth ; and Susannah, his mother, and the sister of Mr. Rogers, the eighth ; making Mr. Rogers the eighth. This is one branch of the tradition. The other is this. Sarah Bowers, daughter of Rev. Mr. Rogers, of Leominster, married Luke Johnson. Their daughter, Mary Johnson, married Mr. Rufus Kendall, whose daughter, the late Mrs. Sarah Rogers Wilder, wife of Abel C. Wilder, was said to be the eleventh from the martyr.

Both these branches make Rev. John Rogers, of Leominster, the eighth from the martyr. I think the martyr must have been called by the tradition the first, his children the second, and so on. If so, Jeremiah, the grandfather of Mr. Rogers, must have been grandson of Nathaniel, of Ipswich, if he came through that branch. Thus : Rev. John Rogers, of Leominster, would be the eighth ; his father, John of Boxford, the seventh ; his father, Jeremiah of Salem, the sixth ; his grandfather, Rev. Nathaniel of Ipswich, the fourth ; his father, Rev. John Rogers, of Durham, England, the third ; his father, one of the ten children of the martyr, the second : and the martyr, the first. This is probably the truth on this subject. Jeremiah's father was either Timothy or Samuel, sons of Rev. Nathaniel, of Ipswich.

Mr. Carter, of Lunenburg, informs me that his great uncle, Doct. Jacob Peabody, Jr., who lived at Exeter, N. H., and whose papers are supposed to be all lost, — had a genealogical table of all the names up to the martyr. He also has in possession a coat of arms of the family, which this same great uncle gave him. It was a sheaf of wheat. Mr. Carter has also the "Rogers' Bible," so called. Tradition is uniform in saying that the martyr's bible was brought to this country, and this book has been handed down from the branch of the family in Boxford. It is printed in black letter, without verses. Sections are marked on the margin, with the letters of the alphabet. The first part is gone, to the thirty-eighth chapter of Exodus. It has been burned pretty badly, and the tradition is that it was burnt at the stake. At the commencement of the Book of Psalms, and of the Apocrypha, there are title pages, but no date ; there is the monogram, or mark of the printer, however, which helps decide the age of the book. The late Christopher Columbus Antiquarian Society, Carter. "This mark of John Cawood to printed only one edi- least, I cannot ascer-



Baldwin, Esq., librarian of the American examined the bible and thus writes to Mr. was used by an ancient printer, by the name designate the books printed by him. He tion of the bible, which was in 1549 ; at tain that he printed more than one. These two circumstances, the mark and the single edition printed by him, make it very manifest that this bible was printed in 1549. And as John Rogers did not suffer at the stake, until February 4, 1555, it is possible that this may have been the identical copy which belonged to him."

This bible, from which the Scriptures were read on the morning of the centennial, was very probably brought out from England, with the portrait

of the martyr, now in the Antiquarian Hall, at Worcester. That came over about 1636 : that is, at the time Nathaniel of Ipswich, came out, the great great grandfather of Rogers, of Leominster. I am fully persuaded, notwithstanding a link is lost in the chain, that Rev. John Rogers, of Leominster, was a descendant of the martyr ; and I am quite confident that Jeremiah of Salem, will prove to be, if documents are ever found, grandson of Nathaniel, of Ipswich.

The following are the names of Rev. John Rogers's children. *Relief*, born July 25, 1753 ; baptized, July 29 ; married, —— Irving.

John, born March 27, 1755 ; baptized, March 30 ; graduated, H. C., 1776 ; studied medicine, married Betsey Mullikin, January 11, 1782 ; settled in Plymouth, N. H., died March 8, 1814.

Thomas, born, June 3, 1757 ; baptized, June 5 ; went to the West Indies ; married there a widow woman of wealth ; died in North Carolina.

Samuel, born, September 30, 1758 ; baptized, October 1 ; killed by Indians, at Saratoga.

Stephen Sewall, born, October 5, 1760 ; baptized, October 12 ; liberally educated, went up the country as a lawyer.

Sarah Bowers, born, June 28, 1762 ; baptized, June 27 ; married, Luke Johnson ; lived where now Mr. Silas Richardson resides.

William Stanton, born, March 20, 1765 ; baptized, March 31 ; was a physician and merchant ; died at Oxford, N. H., November, 1807.

[For the above facts, I am indebted to Farmer's Catalogue of the First settlers in Boston, Salem, and vicinity, Felt's Ipswich, and MSS., which he was kind enough to put into my hands, and to individuals whose names are mentioned in the note.] See Note II. at the close.

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(N)

Leominster Church Covenant, February 4th, 1760.

We, whose names are hereafter subscribed, inhabitants of the town of Leominster, and others in New England, having been incorporated into a church state ; do now before God, angels, and men, solemnly renew our covenant with the Lord, confessing and bewailing our sins, and loathing ourselves for our apostacy from God in Adam, with humble dependence upon the gracious assistance of God to make us steadfast in his covenant, and to establish us to-day for a people unto himself and our seed with us, and that shall come after us ; that he may be unto us a God as he promised unto our fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, whose children we profess ourselves to be, and heirs with them according to the promise, by faith in Jesus Christ, — we do give up ourselves unto the Lord and unto each other by the will of God to be built up a spiritual house, and to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ; — and therefore —

1. We do avouch the Lord to be our God, whose name alone is Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit three persons in one God who is over all blessed forever, to fear him and cleave to him in love, and serve him in truth, with all our hearts : —

2. We do, through the help of the Holy Spirit, (by covenant) choose all the written word of God, to be our only rule for faith and manners, so building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, not preferring one part of the word by partiality to another ; but esteeming every word of God to be pure and useful for reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, and as thoroughly furnishing us to all good works, waiting for the teaching of the Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth, in a diligent comparing scripture with scripture, until the light thereof shine more and more unto the perfect day — and as some of the truths of God are opposed in this day of apostacy ; — we will therefore stand together in the defence of these truths, resisting steadfastly by his word and spirit, all doctrines that tend to undermine the true Deity or Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, or his dignity as King and Prophet and Priest of his church ; or that tend to advance man's innocency by nature, his own merits or righteousness, and to eclipse the sovereignty and efficacy of divine grace in election, vocation and justification, the whole of salvation both begun and perfected being only of grace, without any regard had to good foreseen in man or willed by him ; — as for human composites, we bless God for the great grace and eminent gifts he hath given to some men and shall use the writings of such as are agreeable to the word of God, as helps for our instruction, quickening, comforting and establishing in grace, at the same time searching the scriptures whether what they say be agreeable to them, so our faith may not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God : —

3. We covenant through the help of the Holy Spirit to improve all the ordinances which Christ hath instituted in his church, both general and special, in their appointed seasons ; as prayers, praises, hearing God's word, and to hold communion with each other, in the use of both the seals of the covenant, viz. — Baptism and Lord's Supper : —

4. We promise peaceably to submit to the holy discipline appointed by Christ in his church ; as fellowship, the key for opening the doors of the church, to receive in the righteous that keep the truth ; censure, the key for shutting the door of the church ; public admonition, when the offence is public ; withdrawing from those that walk disorderly, that cause divisions and offences, or forsake church assemblies ; and excommunicating such as are obstinate heretics, or persist in open scandalous sins ; and that there may be the less occasion for public censures and excisions, we promise to warn every brother or sister that offends ; not divulging in private, offences irregularly, but heedfully following the several precepts laid down for church dealing in Matthew xviii. 15, 16, 17, willingly forgiving all that manifest unto the judgment of charity that they truly repent of their miscarriage : —

5. We covenant by the help of the Holy Spirit, faithfully to discharge our several relative duties ; as —

1. To submit to our pastor in waiting upon his ministry, esteeming him very highly in love for his works' sake, and as a steward of the mysteries of God to us, obeying him that hath the rule over us, and counting him worthy of double honor while ruling well.

2. To discharge our duty to our families, especially to our infant seed, challenging their right to a relation unto God in his church, and to baptism the seal thereof, and therefore to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—in special, by the use of such catechisms as are agreeable to the doctrine of grace, especially the Westminster Catechism, and calling upon them as they grow up, to avouch the Lord to be their God, and to take on themselves the bond of the covenant, that so the true religion may be maintained in our families whilst we live, and that when we are dead they may stand up in our stead and be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

3. To discharge our duties to each other, in particular to love one another—to bear each other's burthens and in honor esteeming each other better than ourselves; to watch over each other, praying for, and strengthening and comforting one another.

4. To esteem all men, and to love the brotherhood and fear God, and to do good to all as we have opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Thus we covenant and promise; and now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gardner Wilder,	Samuel Hale,	William Boutelle,
David Johnson,	Joseph Beman,	Joshua Osgood,
Oliver Carter,	Nathan Bennett,	Kendal Boutelle,
Thomas Stearns,	Aaron Brown,	Stephen Buss,
Caleb Sawyer,	Jotham Bennett,	Edward Phelps,
Israel Nichols,	Oliver Hoar,	Joseph Wilder,
Oliver Hale,	James Boutelle,	John Fletcher.
Reuben Gates,	David Robbins,	

—♦—
(O)

Votes respecting Building a new Meeting-House.

1767. March 9. To see whether the precinct will vote to build a meeting-house for public worship, and where they will set it, and how long time is proper for building the same, and choose a committee to manage said affair. Nothing done.

1768. March 8. To see if the precinct will vote to build a new meeting-house, or to finish the old one, and to see what method the precinct will

come into in building, or finishing, or repairing said meeting-house, and choose a committee for the same. Voted, to mend the windows and clapboard the meeting-house.

1769. March 7. To see if the precinct will vote to build a new meeting house. Nothing done.

1770. March 12. To see if the precinct will vote to build a meeting-house, and to come into such measures as they shall think proper for the building and ordering the same, and to agree on a proper and convenient place whereon to build and place the same. Nothing done.

1770. April 2. Voted : To place the meeting-house on the east of the road, near the coal-pit. Voted : That they would not build a meeting-house.

1772. March 9. To see if the precinct will vote to appoint and agree on a convenient place or spot of ground to build a meeting-house on. To see if the precinct will vote to build a meeting-house the present year, and choose a committee for to manage the same, or any other way as the precinct shall think fit. Voted : To place the meeting-house on Rufus Houghton's land south of Edward Fuller's. Voted : That they would not build a meeting-house.

1773. March 31. To see if the precinct will build a meeting-house and come into such measures as they shall think proper for the building and ordering of the same. To see if the precinct will agree upon a proper and convenient place whereon to build and place the same. Voted : To place upon Rufus Houghton's land, ten or fifteen rods south of Edward Fuller's, upon the most convenient place. Voted : To choose a committee to see what we can have a spot of land for of Mr. Rufus Houghton to set a meeting-house upon. Chose Capt. Joshua Wood, Capt. Josiah Carter and Mr. Stephen Johnson as a committee to report next May meeting.

1773. May Voted : To give Mr. Rufus Houghton after the rate of eight pounds an acre for a spot of land to set a meeting-house on. Voted : To build a meeting-house the same bigness of Lunenburg meeting-house. Voted : To have the meeting-house frame raised by the last of June, 1774. Chose Dea. Israel Nichols, Capt. Josiah Carter, Mr. Joseph Whitmore, John Joslin, Jr., and Mr. William Lincoln a committee to let out the meeting-house frame by the great. Voted : To build two porches. The precinct purchased an acre of land as a site for the house; afterward, 1774, sixty rods more was purchased. It is impossible to determine the cost of the second meeting-house, as there are no records of the amounts from time to time appropriated for the purpose, and there appears also to have been much voluntary labor performed.

1773. Aug. 31. Voted : That none but voters, or freeholders shall purchase a pew in the meeting-house. Voted : That no man shall purchase more than one pew in said house. Voted : That those persons that purchase a pew in said house shall use it for their seat in said house. Voted : That those persons that purchase the pews in said meeting-house shall pay one third part of the money that the pews shall be bid off at, at the raising of said frame, and a third part at the finishing of the outside of said house, and the other third part when the meeting-house is completed.

1774. March 21. Voted : That those persons that belong to the second precinct, who have obligated themselves to pay their equal proportion with the first precinct, who are otherways voters according to law, shall have a right to vote in all matters relating to building and finishing a meeting-house in said first precinct, and in no other matters.

A committee chosen April 18, 1774, to attend to the raising of the frame of the meeting-house, are "empowered to draw for what sum of money shall be needful for to provide," but when the frame was raised is uncertain. At first there were seats in part of the body of the house, but they were finally, 1815, made into pews. The house fronted easterly, had a large double door on the front side, and a porch on each end, in which were the gallery stairs, and doors to the lower floor of the house.



(P)

Covenant of the Church drawn up at the commencement of Mr. Bascom's Ministry.

I have omitted a very long preamble containing twice as much as the covenant, but having no bearing upon the history of opinions in the church. It speaks principally of blessings received and obligations to be grateful for them, and devoted in the future.

Art. 1. We unreservedly give up ourselves to Almighty God, choosing him for our friend and everlasting portion, and promising, with the assistance of his grace, to glorify him with our bodies and with our spirits, which are his.

2. We heartily embrace the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices, as our only Saviour, and the Holy Ghost as our sanctifier and teacher.

3. We receive the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the Word of God, and promise to make them the only rule of our faith and religious practice.

4. We promise with seriousness and prayerfulness, to wait on God, diligently, in all his holy ordinances, both common and special.

5. We engage to walk orderly and charitably with each other, to use our endeavors for the promotion of the Church's purity, edification and prosperity; to submit ourselves to its watch and discipline; and in case of offences, to conform to the rule pointed out by our Saviour in Matthew xviii. 15, 16, 17.

6. We promise to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to see that all under our care are instructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, to maintain the worship of God in our families and to set before our households examples of virtue and godliness.

All this we do, looking to the blood of the everlasting covenant for the

pardon of our sins, and praying that the glorious Lord who is the great Shepherd would prepare and strengthen us for every good word and work, and receive us at last to everlasting mansions.

This covenant was then signed by the persons whose names follow :—

William Bascom,	Ephraim Carter,	James Carter,
David Wilder,	Caleb Wood,	Joseph Wilder, Jr.,
Benjamin Perkins,	Samuel Hale,	Elisha Coolidge,
James Boutelle,	Silas Allen,	Isaac Bigelow,
William Burrage, Jr.,	Abijah Butler,	Samuel Crocker,
John Boutelle,	David Wilder, Jr.,	Simeon Butler,
Joseph Wilder,	Josiah Carter,	Ephraim Carter, Jr.,
Ephraim Lincoln,	James Joslin,	Caleb Leland.

(Q)

Rev. Thomas Prentiss graduated at Cambridge, 1811, and was ordained the first minister of the Harvard Church, Charlestown, March 26, 1817.

“To a sound mind and singular amentity of temper, he united that devotedness to his profession, which makes it as certain as anything of this nature can be, that, if he had lived, he would soon have gathered around him a large and prosperous congregation. But it was otherwise appointed in the inscrutable counsels of heaven. He was here but little more than six months. After a distressing illness of eleven days, contracted, as it was supposed, in the over assiduous discharge of his pastoral duties, he departed this life on Sunday morning, the fifth of October.” [Rev. Dr. Walker’s Discourse on leaving his Society, July 14, 1839.]

(R)

Mr. Murdock, in his discourse, speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as “ styling himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ; as being God himself.” (pp. 10, 11.) He says, that “in Adam fell all his offspring.” That “God must be exhibited as existing in three persons ; and the part which each person in the Trinity performs in the great work of redeeming men, must be described.” The Saviour must be exhibited as making “it possible for God to forgive” men. (pp. 12, 17, 20.)

The churches invited to aid in installing Mr. Bascom, were Shirley, Ashburnham, Lincoln, Cambridge, Princeton, Orleans, Templeton, Lunenburg, Sterling, Lancaster, Bolton, Cambridgeport, Harvard and Fitchburg.

Introductory prayer by Rev. Nathaniel Thayer of Lancaster. Sermon by Rev. James Murdock of Princeton. Consecrating prayer by Rev. Abiel Holmes, D. D. of Cambridge. Charge by Rev. John Cushing

of Ashburnham. Right hand of fellowship by Rev. Thomas B. Gannett of Cambridgeport. Concluding prayer by Rev. Charles Wellington of Templeton.

(S)

1816, March 19. The town first acted upon the subject. There was a strong desire to enlarge the old house. June 18. The town voted, forty-five to forty-two, to enlarge it, but the vote was reconsidered on the 25th of the same month. On the 26th of August, a committee of seven is chosen to purchase of widow Mary Chase a site for a meeting-house, which committee reported March 3, 1817, that they had purchased a spot of ground of the widow Mary Chase, comprising between two and three acres and the buildings thereon, for the sum of two thousand dollars, the interest to be paid annually till her decease, and then the principal paid in equal portions to her seven heirs. This became due 1841.

(T)

The documents respecting Mr. Bascom's dismission are too voluminous to be introduced here. Besides; too many of the actors in those events are now living, to make them matters of history, and publish their names in connection with these documents. I have attempted to do nothing more in the Discourse, than state the points of the difficulty sufficiently distinct to enable the reader to understand the general grounds of dissatisfaction and dismissal.

The doings of the council are as follow :

At a meeting of an ecclesiastical council, in the town of Leominster, at the house of Mr. Jonathan Cummings, on Thursday, the 2d day of March, 1820, convened in consequence of letters missive from the Rev. William Bascom, and the church of Leominster, to give their sanction to a dissolution of the ministerial relation mutually agreed upon between the Rev. William Bascom and the church and town of Leominster, were present

Churches in	Pastors.	Delegates.
Westminster,	Rev. Cyrus Mann,	Abel Wood, brother.
Fitchburg,	Rev. William Eaton,	Joseph Simonds, brother.
Lunenburg,	Rev. David Damon,	Deacon William Harrington.

The council was organized by choosing Rev. Cyrus Mann Moderator, and Rev. William Eaton, Scribe. The moderator led the council in addressing the throne of divine grace.

Communications of the Rev. William Bascom were then laid before the council ; one which he made to the church, and one to the town, requesting a dissolution of his ministerial relation.

The committee from the church and town presented copies of the votes of their respective bodies, certifying that they had acceded to the proposals of the Rev. William Bascom, and voted his dismission.

The council then took into consideration the subject laid before them, and investigated it in its interesting consequences ; and while they deeply lament that any circumstances should transpire to render expedient the dismission of the Rev. William Bascom, still as this dismission is mutually agreed upon, and in ecclesiastical order, we do give our sanction to the same, and hereby declare that the ministerial relation between the Rev. William Bascom, and the church and town of Leominster is dissolved.

And as there were no allegations of any description brought against Mr. Bascom's moral or religious character, and it appearing that it was the intention of the church and town that he should be recommended, and the members of this council having long been personally acquainted with him, do accordingly recommend him to the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a man that has sustained a good moral and Christian character, prudent in his conduct, candid in his investigations, evangelical in his sentiments, and faithful in his preaching.

And we do now most heartily sympathize with the Rev. Mr. Bascom in his various trials — being dismissed from a relation which once promised usefulness and happiness, and suddenly thrown upon the world with a large and dependent family — and do pray that he may receive a rich supply of that spiritual consolation which he has so frequently administered to others — that the Lord would open to him in his vineyard a wide field for usefulness, and finally receive him to the reward of those faithful servants, who through much tribulation shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

To the church and society in this place : You are now left without a shepherd, exposed to be scattered and divided. But we commend you to God, who is able to afford you wisdom, guidance and protection.

Suffer no minor or unimportant differences in sentiments to divide you. Let candor and brotherly love prevail. And may the great Head of the Church soon send you a faithful preacher, whose great object shall be to make known the remarkable riches of the Lord Jesus — to convince men of sin — to bring them to repentance and to the cross of Christ for pardon and eternal life.

Voted to be the result of this council.

CYRUS MANN, *Moderator,*
WILLIAM EATON, *Scribe.*

A true copy from the original — attest,

WILLIAM EATON, *Scribe.*

Fitchburg, July 30, 1822.

(U)

Doings of the Council, at the Ordination of Rev. Abel Conant, Jan. 22, 1827.
 (The names of the delegates are omitted ; there were two from each church.)

LEOMINSTER, January 24, 1821.

In consequence of letters missive from the church of Christ, in Leominster, an ecclesiastical council, composed of the following churches, by their pastors and delegates, assembled this day, at the house of Mr. Jonathan Cummings :

Church of Christ, in Berlin,	Reuben Puffer, D. D.
Church in Groton,	by delegates.
Church in Lancaster,	Nathaniel Thayer, D. D.
Church in Wilton, N. H.,	Rev. Thomas Beede.
Church in Bolton,	Rev. Isaac Allen.
Church in Milford, N. H.,	Rev. Humphrey Moore.
Church in Westminster,	Rev. Cyrus Mann.
Church in Fitchburg,	Rev. William Eaton.
Church in Winchendon,	Rev. Eber L. Clark.
Church in Lunenburg,	Rev. David Damon.
Church in Sterling,	by delegates.
Church in Princeton,	Rev. Samuel Clarke.

The council formed at nine o'clock, by choosing Rev. Dr. Puffer, moderator, and Rev. Samuel Clarke, scribe. The reverend moderator addressed the throne of grace for light and counsel, on this occasion.

The council then attended to the proceedings of the church and town of Leominster, relative to the call and settlement of Mr. Abel Conant, as their minister ; and also to the answer of Mr. Conant to their invitation. They then attended to Mr. Conant's license to preach the gospel, to his regular standing in the church, and to his views of Christian doctrine, and motives in entering the ministry. It was then voted, without opposition, that the council are so far satisfied with the proceedings of the church and town, and also with the Christian character and ministerial qualifications of Mr. Conant, that they are ready to proceed to his ordination.

The council then attended to assigning the public performances. *Voted* — That the Rev. Mr. Damon, make the introductory prayer — that the Rev. Mr. Moore, preach the sermon — that the Rev. Mr. Allen, make the consecrating prayer — that the Rev. Dr. Thayer, give the charge — that the Rev. Dr. Puffer, address the church and society — that the Rev. Mr. Beede, give the right hand of fellowship — and that the Rev. Samuel Clarke, make the concluding prayer.

The council then adjourned to the meeting-house, where Mr. Abel Conant was solemnly consecrated to the work of the ministry, and to the pastoral care of the church and town of Leominster — after which the council dissolved.

REUBEN PUFFER, *Moderator.*

SAMUEL CLARKE, *Scribe.*

A true copy — attest,

SAMUEL CLARKE, *Scribe.*

(V)

At the dedication of the new meeting-house, in Leominster, the introductory prayer was made by Rev. Mr. Damon of Lunenburg — the dedicatory prayer, by Rev. Dr. Thayer of Lancaster — the sermon was preached by Rev. Mr. Conant of Leominster — the concluding prayer was by Rev. Mr. Osgood of Sterling. A large audience were highly gratified with the services ; several pieces of sacred music were sung, in a style which did great credit to the choir of singers in Leominster.

The new meeting-house is a neat and commodious building, seventy-five feet in length, sixty-two feet in width, and contains one hundred and thirty pews. The belfry and steeple rest partly on the front end of the house, and partly on a colonnade, thirty-two feet in height, which projects five feet from the front, and is finished in the Ionic order. [Note to Ded. Sermon.]



(W)

The First Congregational Society, in Leominster, was organized the 4th day of May, 1835. A petition was sent, on the 20th of April, 1835, "to William Perry, Esq., one of the justices of the peace, within and for the county of Worcester," to call a meeting for the purpose of organizing the society. Signed by

Ward M. Cotton,	Amos Haws,	Thomas Hills,
Thomas G. Merriam,	Bartemas Tenney,	William Wilder,
Artemas Bowers,	Silas Allen,	William Burrage.
David Wilder,	John Taylor,	
Bazaleel Lawrence,	Charles W. Wilder,	

William Perry, Esq., accordingly issued a warrant to Charles W. Wilder, Esq., to call a meeting. A meeting was held on the 4th of May. The warrant having been read by the magistrate who issued it, Charles W. Wilder, Esq. was chosen, and sworn as Clerk.

William Perry, Esq. was chosen Moderator.

John Taylor was chosen Treasurer, and appointed Collector.

Solon Carter, Phineas S. Burditt, James H. Carter, Assessors.

The name of the society is "First Congregational Society in Leominster," not "Unitarian Society." The expenses of the society are defrayed by a tax upon the polls and estates of the members. Members are received by a vote of the society.

There are two hundred and two names upon the tax-book. Including families which attend the meeting of the society, and such as depend upon the pastor for services in cases of affliction with those which belong to the society, the whole number of families is about two hundred and fifty.

The Evangelical church was organized by an ecclesiastical council, December 25, 1822, and consisted of ten members. The next day, seventeen

were added to it, who had been connected with the First Congregational Church.

The first meeting-house was erected in 1824.

The first pastor, Rev. Philips Payson, was settled in the autumn of 1825, and dismissed, on account of ill health, April 17, 1832.

The present pastor, Rev. O. G. Hubbard, was ordained over the church, May 23, 1833.

In consequence of the increase of the congregation, and a desire for better accommodations, a new house was erected, and dedicated to the worship of God, February 8, 1837.

The whole number that have been connected with the church since its organization, is two hundred sixty-six.

The number now connected with it, is one hundred sixty-six.

The first Baptist preacher in town was John Walker. A society was formed April, 1824. The church was at first a branch of the church in Holden. In August, 1822, it was dismissed from Holden and became a branch of the church in Princeton, but had the privileges of an independent church.

There were many preachers during this period. Rev. Samuel Glover continued with the people two or three years. Rev. Moses Harrington commenced his labors in the spring of 1837, and an independent church was organized May 14, 1837. Mr. Harrington left in three years, and in June, 1840, Rev. Mr. Goddard was ordained. He remained about two years and a half, leaving in the winter of 1843. Since that time Mr. Wilder has supplied the pulpit.

The origin of the Methodist church in Leominster, was in December 27, 1821, when a class was formed of nine members. At this time there was preaching in a private house once in two weeks, on week days, by Benjamin Hazelton and Wanton Case. A Sabbath school was organized, March 9, 1829. Preaching was continued in the usual method of changing preachers from year to year, until 1830, when it was commenced in a small meeting-house, in the east part of the town, and circuit preaching was introduced on the Sabbath once in two weeks. At this time there were thirty members of the church. They gradually increased for a few years, until they numbered sixty members. Afterward they somewhat diminished, when the church saw fit to commence preaching in the centre of the town, in 1839, where they now worship, numbering about sixty members.

The Universalists have had occasional preaching in town for about twenty-five years. They now meet in the Town-Hall, when they have preaching, which, some portions of some years, is once a month. There is no organized society.

(X)

The whole number of votes cast was but fifty-eight, of which thirty-nine were in favor of an invitation, and nineteen against it.

The following is an extract from an obituary notice of Rev. Henry A.

Walker, from the "Christian Register," March 24, 1838. He died at one of the West India Islands, whither he had gone for the recovery of his health.

"Now that he has gone where praise cannot disturb him, we take pleasure in speaking freely of the many virtues which in his life-time were concealed from the public eye, by that charming and singular modesty of his which he wore as a delicate veil, except in the presence of friends.

"His was no common mind. He loved study, and especially took delight in the gravest studies. His taste was pure and elevated; his discrimination accurate; his judgment unusually sound and mature; and in wisdom he was early old. After leaving the Divinity School, he spent two years in Europe, in travel and study, with great benefit to the intellect, but unfortunately with little improvement of the health. On his return to Boston, he preached occasionally, and with great acceptance to his hearers; though debility prevented that forcible delivery which was all he lacked to have made him an eminent and popular preacher."



(Y)

"Voted. That the question whether the parish will give Mr. Rufus P. Stebbins an invitation to become their minister, be decided by the yeas and nays. The vote stood as follows.

Whole number of votes	164.
Yea	164.
Nay	0. [Parish Records.] "

Doings of the Council at the Ordination of Rev. Rufus P. Stebbins.

(The names of the delegates are omitted; there was one from each church.)

By virtue of letters missive from the church and society in the first parish in Leominster, an ecclesiastical council was convened at Leominster on the 20th of September, 1837, of which Rev. Dr. Thayer was chosen moderator, and Rev. Mr. Gilbert, scribe.

The meeting was opened with prayer by the moderator. The churches invited were found to be represented as follow:

University Church,	Cambridge,	by	Rev. Dr. Henry Ware, Jr.
Church in	Lancaster,	"	Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Thayer.
" "	Bolton,	"	Rev. Isaac Allen.
" "	Sterling,	"	Rev. Peter Osgood.
" "	Northborough,	"	Rev. Joseph Allen.
" "	Cambridgeport,	"	Rev. Artemas B. Muzey.
" "	Fitchburg,	"	Rev. Calvin Lincoln.
" "	Harvard,	"	Rev. Washington Gilbert.
" "	Worcester,	"	Delegate.

The proceedings of said church and society inviting Mr. Rufus P. Steb-

bins to become their pastor and his acceptance of the invitation and his Christian ministerial qualifications having been considered, it was

Voted unanimously that the council express their entire satisfaction of the same, and are ready to proceed to ordination.

The public services were then assigned as follows :

Prayer and reading of the Scriptures by	Rev. Peter Osgood.
Sermon	" Rev. H. Ware, Jr., D. D.
Ordaining Prayer	" Rev. Isaac Allen.
Charge	" Rev. Nathaniel Thayer, D. D.
Right Hand of Fellowship	" Rev. Calvin Lincoln.
Address to the Society	" Rev. A. B. Muzzey.
Concluding Prayer	" Rev. Joseph Allen.

Attest,

NATHANIEL THAYER, *Moderator.*

A true copy of record. Attest,
WASHINGTON GILBERT, *Scribe.*

— • —
(Z)

The following statement respecting the Sunday School will show its condition for the past five years—and also the condition of the Library, and other matters connected with the School.

The Sunday school was reorganized in the spring of 1838 by the choice of Mr. Solon Carter, Superintendent; who still continues to discharge faithfully the duties of that office; and a Library Committee; of which the pastor is chairman—whose duty it is to examine all the books deposited in the Library; and a Librarian to attend to the taking of books. No books are allowed to enter the Library unless approved by one or more of the Library Committee. The Library is divided into three parts—one for very small children—another for older pupils—and a third for the oldest members of the school, the Bible class, and the society generally. The Library was not opened to the whole society till the last year. The contribution, taken up annually in the spring for the Library, varies in amount, being from thirty to forty dollars. The books are drawn for the scholars by the teachers of the respective classes, and are exchanged among the scholars in the class till they have all read each book—so that sometimes a teacher having six scholars may not draw from the Library under six weeks, the second time. None of the scholars, except the Bible class, go to the library to take books. The Bible class, and members of the society, take books after the close of the afternoon exercise.

The school is opened, for the season, the second Sunday in May, and continues open till about the middle of November. The school is held Sunday noon. Its exercises are opened by a general Address, or the reading of some

communication from one of the teachers by the superintendent, which is followed by a prayer. Then follows the instruction. The school is closed by singing. A service book has not been used in the devotions of the school till this season. It is the design of the teachers to awaken in the hearts of the pupils religious sensibilities, and impart to the mind religious principles. Hence we design to have but little recitation, and more teaching, especially in the classes of small children.

Teachers' meetings are held at the house of the pastor once in a fortnight. A Secretary keeps a record of all the subjects which are considered by them. The pastor has given lectures on the best mode of teaching, and principles of interpretation, and on various Books of the Bible. The teachers have also had familiar discussions upon many questions relating to the school, the doctrines of religion, and the duties of life. A list of questions is kept on hand, from which one is chosen, and a teacher is then appointed to commence the conversation at the next meeting. Great benefit has resulted from these meetings.

The following table will show the numbers of the school for the last five years.

1838	252 Scholars.	60 in Bible Class,	41 Teachers,	353 Total.
1839	259 "	54 "	47 "	357 "
1840	262 "	50 "	51 "	363 "
1841	265 "	66 "	50 "	381 "
1842	261 "	54 "	46 "	361 "

The School is auxiliary to the Worcester Sunday School Society. The Superintendant is a life member of the Boston Sunday School Society through the kindness of the teachers. The pastor is also a life member of the same society through the kindness of the Ladies' Benevolent Association. The pastor has given a course of familiar lectures to the Bible class each season excepting the last. It is hoped not without benefit.

NOTE I.

The following is a list of the Deacons of the Church.

UNDER MR. ROGERS.

Chosen.	Died.	Resigned.
1743, Nov. 10,	Jonathan White,	time of death not known.
" "	Gardner Wilder,	1787, April 24,
1747, Dec 2	James Bontell,	
" "	Benj Whitcomb,	1778, Oct.
1765, March 19,	Simon Butler.	time of death not known.

UNDER MR. GARDNER.

1763, Dec. 2,	Jonathan White,	time of death not known.
1767, Oct. 1,	Oliver Hoar,	time of death not known.
1769, March 30,	Israel Nichols,	1802, Oct. 12, aged 82.
" "	John Joslin, Jr.	1810, Sept. 6, aged 75.
1775, June 17,	David Wilder,	1815, Dec. 6, aged 75.
" "	Ephraim Carter,	1817, May 7, aged 68. 1814.
1797, March 30,	Abijah Butler,	1822, Jan. 19, aged 71. 1814.
1801, June 5,	John Buss,	now living, aged 84. 1814, Mar. 31.
1814, March 31,	Wm. Burrage, Jr.	now officiates. 1819.
" "	Abel Kendall,	
" "	David Wilder, Jr.	now officiates.

UNDER MR. CONANT.

1819, July 2,	Jonathan Merriam,	1833.
1824, Nov. 7,	Otis Stearns,	now officiates.
1834, Jan. 3,	Charles Hills,	now officiates.

Time of the Decease of some of the Early Settlers.

Jonathan Wilson,	March 31, 1789,	aged 86
Ebenezer Houghton,	May 13, 1790,	" 74
Oliver Carter,	Sept. 11, 1791,	" 75
Jonathan Carter,	Sept. 19, 1799,	" 87
Jonas Kendall,	July 22, 1799,	" 78
Oliver Hale,	May 7, 1799,	" 79
Thomas Legate,	July 13, 1807,	" 73
Josiah Carter,	Feb. 14, 1812,	" 85

The allusion to the pine trees at the close of the discourse, is occasioned by the pine grove in the new Cemetery.

The exercises of the day were, as to their order, such as are usual on Sunday with us. The Scriptures were read in the morning from the Martyr's Bible, described in note M of the Appendix. Psalms xc. 1 — 6 ; ciii. 16 — 18 ; cvii. 1 — 8. The following hymns were sung in the morning. [Mr. Pierpont will excuse the presumption which substituted two verses for one of his at the commencement of the first hymn, and changed some words in a few verses of another of his odes to make it more appropriate to *our* celebration.]

I.

[God of our fathers, hear our prayer
Which at thy shrine we offer now ;
Accept the incense which we bear
Before this altar, as we bow.

One hundred years have passed away
Since first our fathers worshiped here ;
This day we raise our thankful lay
Where trembling, they once sung with fear.]

The wants, the fears, our fathers felt
Have, with our fathers, passed away ;
And where in their dark hours they knelt,
We come to praise thee and to pray.

We praise thee that thou plantedst them,
And mad'st thy heavens drop down their
dew ;
We pray that, shooting from their stem,
We long may flourish where they grew.

And Father, leave us not alone ; —
Thou hast been, and art still our trust ; —
Be thou our fortress, till our own
Shall mingle with our fathers' dust

II.

One hundred years ! — One hundred years !
How much of human power and pride,
What glorious hope, what gloomy fears,
Have sunk beneath their noiseless tide.

And that pale Pilgrim band is gone,
That in this place with trembling trod,
Ready to faint, yet hearing on
The ark of freedom and of God.

'Tis like a dream when one awakes, —
This vision of the scenes of old ;
'Tis like the moon when morning breaks,
'Tis like a tale round watch-fires told.

Then what are we ? — then what are we ?
Yes, when one hundred years have rolled
O'er our green graves, our names shall be
A morning dream, a tale that's told.

God of our fathers, — in whose sight
The thousand years that sweep away
Man, and the traces of his might,
Are but the break and close of day.

Grant us that love of truth sublime,
That love of goodness and of thee,
That makes thy children, in all time,
To share thine own eternity.

In the afternoon the cxxi Psalm was read, and the 248th, 555th, and the last four stanzas of the 299th hymns in Dr. Greenwood's Collection were sung.

NOTE II.

After Note M, in the Appendix, had gone to press, I received the following letter from George Livermore, Esq. of Cambridge, respecting the "Roger's Bible." Mr. Baldwin did not probably enter into any very extended researches respecting Cawood's editions of the Bible.

CAMBRIDGE, Oct. 21, 1843.

MY DEAR BROTHER :

In reply to your inquiries about Cawood's editions of the Bible, I have obtained the following information. There is satisfactory evidence that

Cawood printed four editions of the Bible after the death of John Rogers, the Martyr, viz. :

1st. Lowndes, in his Bibliographer's Manual, Vol. I, p. 174, has the following ; "The Bible — London. John Cawood, 1561, 4to. Cranmer's edition — small gothic type, sixty-one lines in a full page."

2d. Ames (Typographical Antiquities, Vol. 2d, page 787,) says Cawood printed an edition of the Bible the same year (1561) in folio, with notes and figures.

3d. Dibdin in his *Ædes Althorpianæ*, Vol. I. p. 68, gives an account of a Bible in Lord Spencer's Library as follows : "The Holy Bible, Imprinted at London by Cawood, 1569. Quarto."

4th. I have in my possession a copy of Cranmer's version of the Bible, a small black-letter quarto, which has on two of the title pages Cawood's monogram, viz. : at the beginning of the Psalms and at the beginning of the *Hagiographa*. The volume corresponds so nearly with your description of the Bible in the possession of Mr. Carter, that I felt at first quite confident that it was the same edition. But on closely comparing it with the fragment of the leaf which you sent me, I find that mine is printed with a rather larger type, and that the paragraphs are distinguished by old English letters instead of Roman, as in Mr. Carter's. There is no name or date to be found in any part of the Bible — but there is bound up with it the book of Common Prayer, the Colophon of which reads as follows :

Imprinted at London,
In Paules Churchyearde,
By RICHARD IUGGE and IOHN CAVWOOD,
Printers to the Queen's Maiestie.
Cum privilegio Regiae Maiestatis.

Now Queen Mary we know never sanctioned the printing of the Bible. It must, therefore, have been printed after Elizabeth ascended the throne, i. e. 1558. I find that it agrees with an edition mentioned by Lowndes, Vol. I. p. 175, printed in 1568, and have no doubt that both Bible and prayer book were printed that year.

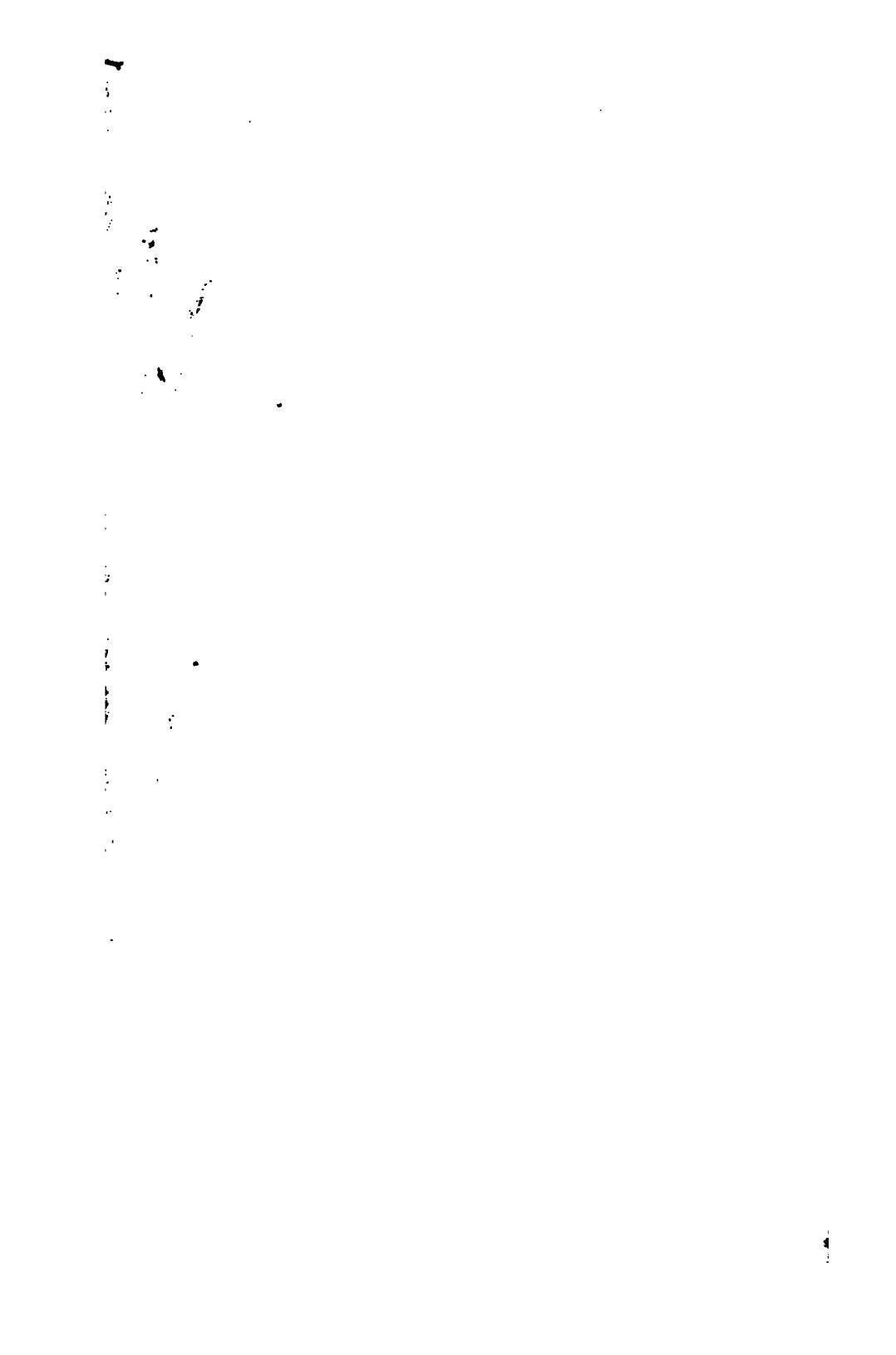
Although the above facts prove that Cawood did print several editions of the Bible, and that the "Rogers Bible" *might* have been printed after 1555, it is by no means certain that such was the fact. Mr. Baldwin, it seems, knew of an edition that was printed with Cawood's mark in 1549, and from other sources we know that he did print the Bible that year. There is no good reason, that I can see, to doubt that the Bible referred to was then printed — that it was in fact the Martyr's copy. My faith in the identity of the Martyr's copy has not been shaken, but rather confirmed by the investigation. The fragment which you sent me does not correspond with either of the later editions that I have seen. Hoping that the above may be of some service to you in your investigations concerning the Rogers family and the Martyr's Bible, I remain

Your Affectionate Brother,
GEORGE LIVERMORE.

Mr. Carter's Bible has the Common Prayer bound up with it, like Mr. Livermore's edition — but Mr. Baldwin determined that to be a later print. At all events, the fact that it has come down in the family with the tradition of being the Martyr's copy, and the more than possible — the probable edition of 1549 mentioned by Mr. Baldwin, and the disagreement of this type with Mr. Livermore's copy, almost demonstrate the identity of Mr. Carter's Bible and John Rogers. I hope some one who has the means, will take interest enough in this matter to set it beyond dispute — if it be not so already.









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